



J. Smith sculp.

JOHN MARCH.B.D.
Vicar of Newcastle.

Sold by Joseph Hall on Tine bridge Newcastle.



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SERMONS

Preach'd on several Occasions,

B Y

John March, B.D.

Late VICAR of

NEWCASTLE upon TINE.

The last of which was Preach'd
the Twenty Seventh of Novem-
ber, 1692.

Being the Sunday before he Died.

LONDON:

Printed for Robert Clavell, and Sold by
Joseph Hall Bookseller in Newcastle. 1693.

SERMONS

Preached on several Occasions

John Blount, D.D.

Imprimatur,

C. ALSTON.

Julii 3.
1693.

R. B. D. Hen. Episc.
Lond. à Sacris,

being the same before he died.

LONDON:

Printed for Robert Clavel, and sold by
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(C. H. G.) 7/1 15/12/14 Printed

THE
PREFACE.

THE Reverend Author of the following Sermons, was a Person of that great Worth and Excellency, that among those who knew him, they need no other Recommendation than his own Name; for (besides that they carry in 'em a certain strain of serious and unaffected Piety, and this imbellished with such Clearness and Perspicuity, such strength and vigour of Expression, such solidity of Argument and Discourse, as must have rendered the perusal of them very pleasant and profitable to all

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well-disposed Readers ; though their Author had been Anonymous) besides which, I say, the truly Pious and Learned Author of them was a Person of such great Accomplishments, both Moral and Intellectual, as would have justly given Credit with all that knew his Personal Excellencies, to much meaner Performances than these. The main Objection this degenerate Age had against him was, that he was a faithful Son of the Church of England, and a zealous Asserter of its Doctrine and Discipline; and one would think, for a Man to be true to his Profession, to that which he hath ex animo subscribed his Judgment, and declared his unfained Assent and Consent, it should be so far from being

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ing reputed a Fault, in him, by those who pretend either to common Honesty, or Modesty, that it should rather be esteemed his Glory and Excellency. As for his Conversation, it was in all respects so Sober and Regular, so Pure and Uncorrupt, as that though he had but little reason to apprehend himself concerned in that Denunciation, Wo be to you when all Men speak well of you; yet so far as I ever heard, even those who spoke worst of him, durst never bespatter him with an Immorality. He was a very diligent Pastor of the Flock committed to his Charge; and that not only in the course of his Publick Ministry, from which without some necessary Occasion he very rarely absented himself, but also

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also in his private Converses :
For besides, that every Lord's
Day in the Evening, he gene-
rally spent a considerable Porti-
on of time in Instructing the
Youth of his Parish, (from which
Pious and Charitable Exercise,
he very rarely suffered himself to
be diverted, even by the Visits of
his best and greatest Friends)
besides which, I say, his known
Abilities in resolving Cases of Con-
science, drew after him a great
many good People, not only of
his own Flock, but from remo-
ter Distances, who resorted to him
as to a common Oracle, and com-
monly went away from him in-
tively satisfied in his Wise and
Judicious Resolutions; and by these
his excellent Qualities and La-
bours, he hath not only purcha-
sed

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sed to himself a Crown of Glory
in Heaven, but also so indeared
his Memory upon Earth to all
that are Virtuous and Good, that
like the Leaves of Roses still
retain their Fragrancy, though the
Rose it self is withered and
dead, and that being dead he
may yet speak to his surviving
Auditors, and that the Memory
of his good Example and Do-
ctrin, may ever flourish among
them; it is the earnest desire
of his Friends, that these Ser-
mons of his may be made Pub-
lick, which though they have
not that accomplished Accuracy
as they would have had, had
they had his last hand to them,
and been prepared for the Press by
his own skilful Pen, yet as they
are, they are rightly worthy the
Chri-

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*Christian Readers perusal, and as
such I recommend them to his
View, and remain his*

Affectionate and

Humble Servant,

John Scott.

Ser.

S E R M O N I.

Psalm lxxvi. 7.

*Thou, even thou art to be
feared; and who may stand
in thy sight, when once thou
art angry?*

I Know no Motives nor Arguments
more likely to awaken Sinners
to their Duty, than a due conside-
ration of Gods Infinite Goodness
and Almighty Power. *Knowest
thou not, saith St. Paul, that the good-
ness of God leadeth thee to Repentance?*
Transcendently great is the Goodness of
B God

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God towards poor Sinners. He freely gave us his Son to Purchase Heaven and Eternal Happiness for us. He sent down his Holy Spirit to dwell with us, that he might sanctifie our corrupt Natures, and make us meet to partake of the vast Inheritance of the Saints in Light; and he excites us to a due improvement of these assistances of the Spirit by proposing the most glorious Rewards of Heaven and Eternal Happiness. Thus God draws Sinners to their Duty by the bands of Love and the cords of a Man, that is, by Arguments of such an obliging Nature, as are most likely to prevail with men whom he hath endowed with Reason and Understanding. But how few are there who have so much ingenuity as to be won by kindness. The greatest part of mankind must be treated with severer methods, according to the observation of St. *Austin* *Plures sunt quos terror corrigit, pauciores quos allicit amor*: Such, saith he is the corruption and degeneracy of our Natures, that very few are drawn to their Duty by the Bands of Love; the generality of men must be driven to it by the fears of Punishment. For this reason the wiser Heathens made *Hercules* the Go

God of Power, their God of Eloquence too; intimating that no Arguments are more forcible or more prevalent than those which alarm our fears. Now God, who is never wanting in any thing that may conduce to our Salvation, is observed in Scripture frequently to urge these powerful Arguments upon us. *Fear not them*, saith our Saviour, *who can do no more than destroy the Body; but fear him who is able to destroy both Body and Soul in Hell.* Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men, saith St. Paul, 2 Cor. 5. 11. To the same end and purpose we find *Asaph*, the Author of this *Psalms*, magnifying the power of God in the defeat of *Sennacherib's* Army. *Thou hast broken the Arrows of the Bow, the Shield, and the Sword, and the Battel*, vers. 3. *The Stout-hearted are Spoiled, they have slept their sleep, and none of the Men of Might have found their Hands*, vers. 5. *At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the Chariot and Horse are cast into a deep sleep*, vers. 6. Those expressions of our Psalmist relate unto *Sennacherib*, King of the *Assyrians*; this Monarchy, in *Daniel's* Vision, is, for its strength, compared unto the Lion: and it was at its Ze-

nith in the reign of *Sennacherib*, whose very name signifies a fierce Warrior, and whose Subjects, the *Assyrians*, are deservedly stiled by our Psalmist the Stout-hearted, because, being flush'd by many Victories, they feared neither man nor God himself, whom they reviled in a horrid manner, as appears by the Blasphemies of *Rabseca*: And yet even these stout-hearted *Assyrians* were spoiled; the Army of this great Monarch *Sennacherib* was miraculously defeated, either by the Pestilence, as *Josephus* reports, or by a destroying Angel, as the Scripture relates. Even *Sennacharib* himself, tho' then the greatest King upon Earth, was not able to stand in God's sight when he was angry; he came to a fatal end, and was slain in the Temple of his God by his own Sons. Nay farther yet, after his death he had a Statue erected in the Temple of *Vulcan*, with this pious Lesson inscribed on it, εἰς ἐμὴν πρὸς ἡρώων ἐπιστῆναι ἕλω, that is in English, *Whosoever beholdeth me, let him learn Piety*. And since these things were so, our Psalmist had good reason to make this Epiphonema in the Text, *Thou, even thou art to be feared, and who may stand in thy Sight, when once then*

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thou art Angry? From the words thus far explained, I shall take occasion to shew you,

First, That there is great reason to fear the Lord our God. And

Secondly, The vanity of those reasons which cause most men to shew so little fear of God in their Lives and Conversations.

First, Let me shew you what great reason there is to fear the Lord our God, and this will appear at large by these particulars.

1st. We shall find reason enough to fear the Lord our God, if we consider his Sovereign Power over all Creatures, which he is able to command at his Pleasure, and make them revenge his Quarrel upon impenitent Sinners. As God Almighty by the bare speaking of a word created all things both in Heaven and in Earth; so he can with as much ease command all Creatures to execute his Wrath and Vengeance upon Sinners. It is the observation of the Eloquent *Tertullian*, that God as soon as he had finished the great work of the Creation, did then, but not till then, assume the dreadful Title of Lord of Hosts. And it is fur-

ther observed by others, that this Dreadful Title is mentioned in Scripture more than two hundred times, the better to deter Sinners from affronting Omnipotent Majesty. It seems the Sinner cannot make War with Heaven, but he must at the same time arm the whole Creation against himself; he cannot fight against the Almighty, but he must also fight against all those Creatures which are under the Command of this Lord of Hosts. The Heathen Poet is able to tell us, *πλεὴν μὲν γὰρ γαῖα κακῶν πλεὴν δὲ θαλάσση, &c.* *All the Elements, saith he, are full fraught with Evils, and ready when God pleaseth to pour forth ruin and destruction upon Sinners. So dom and Gomorrah did no sooner kindle their impure flames, but the Element of Fire descending in sulphureous Streams, made them most dreadful Monuments of Eternal Vengeance. As soon as Israel began to murmur against Moses, the Element of Air mingled Pestilential Vapours with their Vital Breath, and chastised their Rebellion with a dreadful Plague. When proud Pharaoh gathered together all the strength of Egypt, and furiously pursued the Children of Israel to the Red Sea, the waters there-*
of

of soon swelled themselves into mountainous Billows, as if they had been proud to be employed in the service of Heaven, and the destruction of the *Egyptians*. The Earth also, as dull and senseless as it seems to be, is yet able to resent such indignities as are offered to the Almighty; and when commanded by God, will open its devouring Mouth, and swallow down alive *Corah*, *Dathan* and *Abiram*. Thus all the Elements are at Gods command, yea even joyce to be employed by Heaven, in executing Wrath and Vengeance upon Sinners. And whither now will the Sinner fly from this Lord of Hosts? Will his Alliance with Hell protect him from the Almighty? Or can he hope to hide himself from the heat of his fury in the shades below? No *certes*; he may as well seek Heaven in Hell as expect one single beam of comfort from these Regions of Darkness: for from these black quarters it was that God of old commanded an evil Spirit to vex *Saul*, and drew whole Legions of Devils to punish the degenerate *Jews* in the days of our Saviour. Nor does our God rule only in this sublunary World, in the Seas and in all deep places, but he ru-

leth also in the Heavens. For if the Almighty doth at any time frown upon the sinner, each Planet will put on its Malign Aspect, and every Constellation shall foretel his destiny. Thus the Stars fought in their Ranks against *Sisera*, and as *Josephus* reports, poured down such prodigious showers of Hail, as served instead of Shot to destroy his Army. Thus also the Sun and Moon became fixt Stars in Heaven, that the *Israelites* might not want the benefit of the light to compleat their Victory over the *Amorites*. Thus the Elements, the Heavens and Hell it self are at the Command of Almighty God; and if there yet be wanting more Forces to fight these Battles of the Lord, the Angels are still remaining, those mighty Hosts of Heaven and standing Militia of the Almighty. Indeed God doth not always draw forth these *Trainbands* of Heaven; an Army of Lice serves sometimes to baffle a proud *Pharaoh*, and a silly Worm, when commissioned by God, is able to spoil the Divinity of a Blaspheming *Herod*: But when the King of Heaven appears, as it were, in Person against his Enemies; then these Courtiers of Heaven attend the Divine Presence, and putting on their Robes

Robes of Light, add what Lustre they can to the Majestatick Appearance. Hence it is that Christ, when he shall come at the last day to destroy at once all the Works of Satan, he shall not only have Angels for his Trumpeters, but *Matt. 16. 27.* he is said to come in the *Glory of the Father*, because he shall come attended with these Glorious Angels. And now when all these Battalions of the Almighty shall set themselves in array against the Sinner; when he shall not only fear with *Cain* lest he fall a prey to every Wild Beast, but with *Pashur*, in the Prophet *Jeremy*, becomes a *Magor Missabib*; that is, surrounded with fears from all parts of the Creation, then doubtless he will say with the Psalmist, *Thou, even thou art to be feared, and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?* Our Saviour in the Parable makes him more stout than wise; who having only ten thousand, is not affraid to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand: But sure every Sinner stands guilty of infinitely greater madness, who with his single valour dares the Almighty; and bids defiance to him, who comes not only with twenty thousand, but with the

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the whole Universe against him. O consider this all ye that forget God, lest he pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you: Take our Saviours advice, send and sue for peace, whilst this Almighty Adversary is but yet on his way: Labour by your Prayers, your fasting and humiliation to reconcile your selves to this Lord of Hosts.

2ly, We shall find yet more reason to fear the Lord our God, if we consider seriously that great power he exercises over the Souls and Consciences of men. It is a true saying of Seneca, if understood with respect to men, *In corpore exercentur supplicia, animus ipse sacer & æternus est, cui nequeat injici manus*: The Sword of Justice which Earthly Potentates carry before them as the Ensign of their Power, can only hurt the Shell of Man; insomuch that the greatest Tyrants are honoured in Scripture with no higher Titles than those of Masters according to the flesh: For the Soul or Spirit is far enough out of the reach of their Power, the Conscience is secure from their rage and fury; and it is the Prerogative Royal of God, as by his Omniscience to know the most inward thoughts; so by his Omnipotence

to

to be able to punish them, When the Almighty pleases he breaks into the solitary recesses of the Soul, and lodges his revenging furies in the Inner Man. And now could we set a Casement upon the Breast of an *Orestes*, or some despairing Sinner, and there see those *ictus* and *laniatus*, those gnawings of the Worm which prey upon all the Vitals of the Soul, we should easily grant with *Tertullian*, that an enraged Conscience is *præjudicium judicii*, the Antedate of the last Judgment: we might then see Hell seizing the Wretched Sinner here upon Earth; at least inflicting some part of its Torments on this side the Grave. Such a dreadful Monument of Vengeance was cursed *Cain*; no sooner did he kill his Brother *Abel*, but he became a wretched Vagabond; he trembled at the sight of every Beast, saith *Josephus*, and was forced to bear such incredible Torments, as he himself confessed *were greater than he could bear*. It is sad enough for the Sinner to have God Almighty and the whole World against him, but his condition must needs be sadder, when he becomes a Traytor to himself, nay more, his own Tormentor. So much of Truth there is in that saying

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ing of *Seneca*, *Nemini gravius imprecari potes, quam ut seipsum habeat iratum*, Thou canst not, saith he, lay an heavier curse or imprecation upon any person, than to wish him angry, or at enmity with himself. And now, I hope, we will joyn with the Psalmist in the Text, and say, *Thou, even thou, O Lord, art to be feared; and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art Angry?* Fearful we are to offend an earthly King; how careful of our Words and Behaviour, lest by Treason or any Misdemeanour we fall under his displeasure? But what, I pray, are Gibbets, Racks, or the most ingenious Torments they can invent, to the fullen Lashes, and silent Girds of an intraged Conscience? Let *Solomon*, if you please, determin this matter, Prov. 18. 14. *The Spirit of a Man, saith he, can bear all his Infirmities, but a wounded Spirit who can bear?* How many noble Martyrs have sung and danc't amidst the devouring Flames? But what *Judas*, what *Spira*, what daring Sinner, was ever yet able to bear the stings of a wounded Spirit? What reason then have we to fear the Lord our God, who can, when he pleases, wound our Spirits, and fill our Souls with

with the ineffable torments of black despair? But,

Thirdly, We shall find yet more reason to fear the Lord our God, if we consider those most exquisit and eternal Punishments he is able to inflict both on the Bodies and Souls of Sinners in the Lake below. If the bold Sinner has but courage enough to look beyond the Grave, he will find prepared for him the eternal *Tophet*, such a dreadful place of Torments, as is most tragically described by the Prophet *Isay*, Chap. 30. 33. *Tophet is prepared of old, saith he, the Pile thereof is Fire and much Wood, and the Breath of the Lord like a stream of Brimstone, doth kindle it continually.* See how each word is armed with Thunder! It seems there is Fire in this eternal *Tophet*, yea there is a great Pile of Fire. Now how dreadful, how terrible is Fire? Which the *Persians* of old were wont to call, *immanissima bel-lua*, a most fierce and devouring Monster: And yet this Fire of *Tophet* is no ordinary Fire; it is no such material Fire as we have in our Chimneys. For the Scripture tells us, *it was originally prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* Now the Devil and his Angels being
spiritual

spiritual Beings, cannot be tormented by any material or corporeal Fire: The Fire therefore of *Tophet* must be some strange metaphorical Fire, such as the Fire we use is only fit to be made a cold and faint emblem of it; and we will the rather believe this, when we consider that it is said to be kindled by the Breath of Almighty God. The fiery Furnace of *Babylon* was dreadful enough, tho' kindled only by the finite power of an earthly King: How dreadful then must the Furnace of Hell be, which has all the Treasures of Torments Infinite Wisdom could invent? If all this be not sufficient to make these Torments dreadful, remember that they are said to be prepared for the Devil and his Angels. We know these infernal Friends are the most inveterate and most malicious Enemies of Heaven; such as did not only at first endeavour to dethrone their Almighty Creator, but have ever since employed all their malice and subtilty to affront God, and draw mankind into a conspiracy against him. Sure then that Fire which was at first prepared for these inveterate and malicious Enemies of Heaven, cannot possibly want any ingredients of Torture, either Infinite Wis-
dom

dom could invent, or Infinite Power inflict : And yet such devouring Flames as these, are not only prepared for the Devil and his Angels, but likewise for all impenitent Sinners. How fearful a thing then will it be *to fall into the Hands of the Living God?* And yet it will be more fearful, if we consider the eternity of all these Torments. For *in Hell the Worm never dies, and the Fire shall never be quenched.* When the Sinner has lain in Hell as many millions of Ages as there are Stars in Heaven, or Sands on the Sea-shore, he will be no nearer an end of his Torments, than he was the first moment he entred into that place of Torments. *Who then will not fear the Lord our God? Who may stand in his sight when once he is Angry?* But it seems our Psalmist met with some in his days *who had no fear of God before their Eyes : who did set their Mouths against Heaven, and bid defiance to the Almighty.* And are there not still too many in the World, who discover little or no fear of God in their Lives and Conversations, such, I mean, as are not affraid to spit in the Face of Heaven by their drunken

Vo-

Vomits, who profane his tremendous Name by Oaths and Blasphemies, de-ride his Ordinances, and break his Holy Laws by their notorious Debaucheries? But sure these men have other apprehensions of the Majesty of Heaven than our Psalmist had; surely they frame to themselves such notions of a Deity, as allow them with *Jehu*, to drive on furiously in the ways of wickedness. It will therefore be a piece of Charity to undeceive these deluded Wretches, to shew them the weakness of those Principles they build upon, and the vanity of those Reasons which so much emboldens them in their evil Practices, and this was the Second General I proposed to speak to. And,

First, Atheism is one main reason why many discover so little fear of God in their Lives and Conversations. As the belief of a Deity is the Foundation of all Religion, and he that cometh unto God must first believe that he is, as *St. Paul* speaks, *Heb. 11. 6*. So on the contrary, Atheism must needs be the spring and source of all Irreligion and Prophaness: Hence is that of the Psalmist, *Psal. 14. 1, 2. The Fool and*

bath said in his Heart, there is no God; and then follows in the next words, they are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doth good. But how well doth he deserve the Title of a Fool, who denies the Being of a God, which the whole Creation is one great evident and undeniable demonstration of. This vast and wonderful Fabrick of Heaven and Earth proclaims with a loud voice, the infinite Power and Wisdom of that Glorious Being which did at first Create it. For, as the *Roman Orator* observed of old, Should a Traveller come into a strange Country, and find some vast Magnificent Palace there, tho' he should see nothing but Rats, Weasels, and such like Creatures in it; yet he would easily conclude some Wise and Skilful Architect had been there: even so the Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament sheweth his Handy-work: Hence is that of St. Paul, *Rom. i. 20. The invisible things of God, from the Creation, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his Eternal Power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.*

case. The Atheist therefore must needs be in a very dangerous condition, who denies that Almighty Being the whole Creation doth so loudly proclaim.

Secondly, Infidelity of the Scripture is another great reason why men discover so little fear of God in their Lives and Conversations. Many there are that believe a God, who do not yet believe those dreadful punishments which are threatned in the Scripture, and therefore the hopes of impunity makes them run to all excess of riot. For when there is an evil heart of unbelief, there will be a departing from the Living God; hence is that advice of the Apostle, Heb. 3. 12. *Take heed, Brethren, lest there be in any of you an Evil Heart of Unbelief.* And what better remedy can there be of this Unbelief, than a serious consideration of those Miracles, which were wrought to confirm our Faith in the Gospel? For as Miracles are the highest evidence Heaven can give; and the Truths of the Gospel have been confirmed by many prodigious Miracles; so these Miracles have been attested both by
Friends

Friends and Foes. The Universal Tradition of the Church, for more than 1600 years, cannot but be a very substantial Evidence of these Miracles to all Christians: and yet besides this, we have the concurrent Testimonies both of *Jews* and *Pagans*. *Josephus*, the *Jew*, reports of our Saviour, that he went about doing good, and confirmed his Doctrine by Mighty Signs and Wonders: Nay farther yet, *Pontius Pilate*, as *Eusebius* informs us, sent a large Narrative of our Saviours Miracles to *Tiberius Cæsar*, who laid them up among the Records of the Empire, and accordingly they are appealed to by the Antient Fathers. Let us not therefore be any longer faithless, but believing. We cannot have a surer Foundation for our Faith, than the Evidence of Miracles; and he must needs be a Miracle of Infidelity himself, who doth not believe those Miracles which were wrought by our Saviour, seeing they have been attested both by Friends and Foes, and confirmed to us, not only by *Christians*, but also by *Jews* and *Pagans*.

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Thirdly, I shall name but one Reason more, why many men discover so little fear of God in their Lives and Conversations; and that is a dangerous opinion they have imbib'd of a state of Annihilation after death. The Infamous Author of the Monstrous *Leviathan* has sadly debauch't this unhappy Age of ours, by teaching *That the Wicked after Death shall have no Resurrection: no*, as he tells them, *they shall return to their Primitive Nothing; and have no more sense of Pain than they had before they received their Being.* A Doctrin this most fatal to Piety and Vertue! For if Wicked Men can once persuade themselves that they need not fear any severer punishment after Death than that of Annihilation, then they will for certain run to all excess of Riot. For this, and no other was the use which was made of this pernicious Doctrin in the days of *St. Paul*; this and no other was the language of *Epicureans* then, as you may read in *1 Cor. 15. 32.* *If the Dead rise not, say they, let us Eat and Drink, for to morrow we Die.* But what saith *Solomon* to such Sinners as these,
Eccles.

Ecclef. 11. 9. *Rejoyce, O Young Man, in thy Youth, and let thy Heart chear thee in the days of thy Youth; walk on in the ways of thy own Heart, and in the sight of thine own Eyes: yet know thou that for all these things God will bring thee unto Judgment.* What a dismal day will the day of Judgment be to such deluded Sinners? They will then at least find this Doctrin of Annihilation sadly confuted, when they shall wish in vain, that they had never been born; and shall call upon the Rocks and Mountains to do them so much kindness, as to crush them into nothing. For certainly the gnawings of the Worm, and the unquenchable burnings of Fire denote another state than that of Annihilation. I hope by this time you will allow me to say with the Psalmist in the Text, *Thou, even thou, O Lord, art to be feared.* Believe it, there is no contending with Almighty God. Let the Potsherds strive with the Potsherds of the Earth, but wo unto him that striveth with his Maker. Cease therefore to do evil, and learn to do well; perfect Holiness in this fear of the Lord all

the days of your lives, and then that God who is able to destroy you, will be found as able, and much more willing to save you for the Merits of your dearest Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom, &c.

SERMON

S E R M O N I I.

Revel. ii. 5.

*I will come unto thee quickly,
and will remove thy Can-
dlestick out of his place,
except thou repent.*

ST. Jerom says of this Book of Revelations, that it hath as many Mysteries as Words; and St. Austin gives a like Character of it, when he tells us, it will *exercere mentes legentium*, that is, set their Wits to work, who set themselves to

read it. But notwithstanding all this, what is said of the Scripture in general, is also true of this Scripture in particular: Namely, that tho' there be many Floods, yet there are many Foords; tho' there be many Depths where the greatest Elephants may swim, yet there are also some Shallows, where the least Lambs will be able to wade. In some places the Holy Spirit soars aloft above the reach of the Highest, and in other places he stoops so low, as to condescend even to the Capacity of the Meanest: And so he doth here in the Text, where there are no difficulties to puzzle us, but plain things to instruct and direct us. The Text is a part of that Epistle which was sent by Christ to the Angel of the Church of *Ephesus*. *Ephesus* was a large City, upon which depended several lesser places, as the Learned *Hammond* and others observe. And according to that Government Christ had set up in his Church, there was an Angel or Bishop constituted to oversee the Flock of Christ in these places. Hence St. *Austin*, speaking of the seven Angels which are mentioned in this Book of *Revelations*,

lations, stiles them the Bishops or Governours of these seven Churches. Such a Bishop or Angel was set over the Church of *Ephesus*; and Antiquity tells us, *Onesimus* was their Bishop; to this Bishop or Angel doth Christ send an Epistle, as may be learn'd from verse 1 of this Chapter, *Unto the Angel of the Church of Ephesus, write.* The whole Epistle, besides the Prologue and the Epilogue, consists of four Principal Parts.

First, A commendation of them for their Labour and Patience, and unwillingness to suffer them that are Evil, *vers. 2, 3.*

Secondly, A Reprehension, wherein they are blamed for leaving their First Love, and abating something of the Zeal and Fervour for the Gospel of Christ, *vers. 4.* And,

Thirdly, An Exhortation to things of great Importance here, in the beginning of the Text, *Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works.* And,

Fourthly, A Commination in the last words of the Verse, *Else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy Candlestick out of his place.* For the fuller understanding of which words,

First,

First, We will first inquire why the Church of Christ is compared unto a Candlestick.

Secondly, Shew you that this Candlestick may be removed out of his place.

Thirdly, That it is an heavy Judgment to have this Candlestick removed out of his place.

Fourthly, The Causes of this heavy Judgment. And,

Fifthly, The Means to prevent it. I begin,

First, With the first of these, Namely, to enquire why the Church of Christ is compared unto a Candlestick. That the Church of Christ is compared to a Candlestick, is plain from *Chap. i. 20.* where we are told, that *The seven Stars are the Angels of the seven Churches; and the seven Candlesticks are the seven Churches.* And well may the Church of Christ be compared unto a Candlestick, since it holds forth the Word of God, which is so often compared unto a Light. *We have a more sure word of prophesie, saith St. Peter, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light shining in a dark place.*

2 Pet.

2 Pet. i. 19. To the same purpose is that of David, Psal. 119. 105. *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.* The World indeed, of it self, is a very dark place, and stands in need of Light: It is a dark and dismal place, in respect of those manifold troubles and miseries which infest this Life. Now the Word of God is a Light which helps to scatter and disperse these Mists of Trouble. So King David found it, Psal. 119. 50. *This is my comfort in my affliction; thy word has quickned me.* The whole world, saith St. John, *lieth in wickedness*; and it were impossible for us to find our way to Heaven without the light of God's Word. But God is so gracious, as to give us his Word to be *a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our paths.* How ought we then to prize and value the Church of God, which is no less than the Light of the World; without the direction whereof, we must have wandred up and down the Wilderness, and never have found out the way to Canaan! There is no Salvation out of the Church, *Nec erit illi Deus Pater, cui non est Ecclesia Mater*; God, saith

saith St. Cyprian, *will not be his Father, who doth not own the Church for his Mother.* Had we been born without the Pale of the Church, we had been Aliens from the Commonwealth of *Israel*; Strangers to the Covenants of Promise, without God, without Christ, and without Hope in this World. Sure then we who are born within the Pale of God's Church, and enjoy the glorious Light of the Gospel, should rejoyce in this Light, and learn to Prize and Value it; otherwise we may be deprived of it, and lose all the advantages thereof, as will appear by considering the Second General.

Secondly, Which is to shew that this Candlestick may be removed out of his place. This is plain from the words of the Text, where we have our Saviour speaking thus to the Church of *Ephesus*, *Except thou repent, I will come unto thee quickly, and remove thy Candlestick out of his place.* Christ's Church therefore may fail and be extinguish'd. But for the more distinct decision of this point, we must carefully distinguish of Christ's Catholick and Universal Church, and of some particu-
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lar Church of Christ, seated in some particular Kingdom or Nation; as the Church of *England*, the Church of *Scotland*, the Church of *Denmark*, and the like. Now,

1st, It is certain in the first place, that the Catholick or Universal Church can never fail, and be totally extinguished; this larger Candlestick shall never be removed. We have several promises in Scripture, which assure us of the perpetuity of Christ's Church, and that it shall continue even unto the end of the World. So our Saviour promises his Apostles, Mat. 28. *Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.* And again, Mat. 16. 18. it is said, *that Christ has built his Church upon a Rock, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.* Thus firm and stable is the Catholick Church, as St. Chrysostom speaks elegantly, *It may be assaulted, but not defeated; it may be distressed, but not destroyed; it may be wounded, but it shall not fall; it may be tossed, but not wreck'd; it may, and shall be militant, but yet never be overcome.* But,

2ly, Tho' the Catholick and Universal Church be thus stable and perpetual, yet no particular Church can claim this priviledge: The Church of any particular Place or Nation, may utterly fail, and have its Candlestick removed from it. This is threatned in the Text to the Church of *Ephesus*, and has been the sad fate of several other particular Churches. For where are those many Famous Churches in *Africa*, which were so glorious and flourishing in the days of *St. Austin*? Where are those seven Golden Candlesticks, those seven Famous Churches of *Asia*? *St. John* mentions in the three first Chapters of this Book of *Revelations*? Are they not utterly ruin'd and destroyed? And dwells there any thing in these places but Ignorance, Barbarity and Mahumetanism? Thus ye see it is most plain, that tho' the Catholick shall never fail, yet the Church of any particular Place and Nation may. Tho' he will not remove his Candlestick quite out of the World, but will always have a Church in some place or other; yet it is not certain it shall be in this or that Nation: He may remove
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his Candlestick from *England*, or *Holland*, or any other particular Nation which has filled up the measure of their Iniquity. In such a case he deals with them as our Saviour threatens to deal with the *Jews*, Mat. 21. 43. *Therefore I say unto you, the Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a Nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.* Thus Christ threatned, and because the *Jews* did not repent, he dealt with them accordingly; for they are now become *Lo-ammi*, no more a People, but wrath is come upon them to the uttermost. I cannot dismiss this point, without an Inference or two. And,

1st. If every particular Church may fail, then the Church of *Rome* is vain in boasting so much of her Perpetuity and Indefectibility. We know she is but a part of the Catholick Church, and a very corrupt part of it too; and therefore in vain do they fancy, *that the gates of Hell shall never prevail against them.* St. Paul gives them better advice, Rom. 11. 21, 22. *Be not high minded, but fear; for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.* This Epistle, ye know,

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is written to the Church of *Rome* ; and if this Church of *Rome* had been Infalible and Perpetual, St. *Paul* had mightily fail'd in his Logick ; for he makes them subject to the same fate which befell the *Jews*, and that they might fail as well as they had done.

2^{ly}. Since particular Churches may fail, then this should make them study their preservation, and use such means as may be effectual to that purpose. If the Professors of Christianity, in any Nation, shall become vain in their imaginations, exchanging plain and wholesome Truth, for fond Speculations and Opinions ; if they shall turn Factious and Schismatical, neglecting their Spiritual Guides and Pastors ; if they be Dissolute in their Manners, and confute their Religion by their Lives ; they will provoke God to remove his Candlestick, and bring confusion upon them. Christ is so far from promising safety and protection to any particular Church and People, who neglect their own safety, that he threatens ruin and destruction to them, *except thou repentest, I will come unto thee quickly, and remove thy Candlestick out of his place.* How careful then should

should we, of this Nation, be to preserve the Gospel among us, lest God carry it away from us unto a People that will better bring forth the fruits thereof? And to excite us all to this study and carefulness, I proceed in the third place to,

Thirdly, Shew you, that it is an heavy Judgment to have this Candlestick removed out of his place. It is in the Text threatned as an heavy Judgment to the Church of *Ephesus*, *Except thou repent, saith Christ, I will come unto thee quickly, and remove thy Candlestick out of his place.* So our Saviour threatens it as an heavy Judgment unto the Jews, *Matt. 21. 43. Therefore I say unto you, the Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a Nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.* And the greatness of the Judgment will appear at large from these following particulars.

1st. It deprives a Nation of its chiefest Honour. As it is the highest Honour in this World to be related to an Earthly King, so it is a much higher Honour to be related to the King of Kings. Hence it is that of the Prophet *I say,*

Chap. 43. 4. *Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable.* Now all this Honour is lost, when once a Nation loseth its Relation to God. Thus God dealt with the Jews, Hosea 1. 9. *Then said God, call his name Lo-ammi, for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God.* When God removes his Candlestick, and rejects a Nation from being his People, they become then as contemptible as *Heathens* and *Infidels*, as vile and despicable as the *Jews* have been in the World ever since God disowned them for his People.

2ly. This heavy Judgment does also deprive a Nation of God's special care and providence. We know God's Church and People are as dear to him as the Apple of his Eye; and he is as he has promised, *a Wall of Fire round about them.* Now a Wall of Fire is both Defensive and Offensive, and denotes that God by his special Providence does not only defend his chosen People, but also offends and destroys their Enemies. Behold, saith the Psalmist, Psal. 33. 18. *Behold, take notice of this, saith he, namely, that the Eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him:* Of these he takes

takes a ſpecial Care, and exerciſes a moſt tender and watchful Providence over them, *to deliver their Soul from Death, and to keep them alive in the time of Famine*; thus happy are the People *whoſe God is the Lord*. But if by our ſins we provoke God to remove our Candleſtick out of his place, and reject us from being his People, then ſhall we loſe our right and title to this his ſpecial Care and Providence; we ſhall ſoon then become a prey unto our Enemies, a reproach and by word to all that are round about us. When the Jewiſh Nation had filled up the Meaſure of their Iniquity, a Dreadful Voice was heard in their Temple, ſaying, *Migremus hinc, migremus hinc*, let us go hence, let us go hence; intimating that God and his Holy Angels were then departing from them, and withdrawing their Care and Providence over them: And preſently after this the Abomination of Deſolation was brought upon them, ſo that they have ceaſed ever ſince, not only to be the Church and People of God, but alſo to be a Nation; being ſcattered and diſperſed up and down the World, and hated in all

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places. But this will appear yet farther,

3ly. To be an heavy Judgment, if we consider that the Holy Ghost in Scripture, esteems it an heavier Judgment than others are. Adversity and Oppression are heavy Judgments, and yet but light in comparison of this. So much may be gathered from Isaiah 30.20. *Tho' the Lord give you the Bread of Adversity, and the Water of Affliction; yet shall not thy Teachers be removed into a corner any more; but thine Eyes shall see thy Teachers, and thine Ears shall hear a Voice behind thee, saying, this is the way, walk in it.* Tho' Oppression and Adversity be heavy burthens, yet are they nothing to the loss of Teachers, and the deprivation of God's Ordinances. So long as God's Candlestick shines amongst us, and we enjoy the great advantages of Prayers, Sermons and Sacraments, other Judgments may the better be dispensed with. Famine is another very sore Judgment; when this rages, God is said to *march through the Land in indignation.* Hab 3. 12. and we will not stick to believe it, when we consider the direful effects and consequences of Famine.

mine. We read in our Chronicles that there was formerly such a dreadful Famine in this Island, that when Malefactors were lead out of Prison towards the place of Execution, the poor hungry people would presently fall upon them, and tearing them in pieces, eat them up. And we will not wonder at it, when we read Ezek. 5. 10. *Of Fathers eating up their Sons, and Sons their Fathers*: And which is stranger and more unnatural yet, we find Lam. 4. 10. *Tender compassionate Women, forced by the extremity of hunger, to seeth their own Children*. These are horrid instances of a dreadful Judgment, and yet we have a sadder instance of it; and Famine is said to be such a devourer, as causes a man to devour himself, as you may read *Isay 9. 20.* where every man is brought in *eating the Flesh of his own Arm*. Thus great and heavy a Judgment is Famine; yea, by some it is thought to be one of the forest Heaven can inflict; and yet it is inferior to this of the Text, when God in wrath *removes our Candlestick out of his place*; when he takes his Gospel away from us, and deprives us of all

the priviledges and advantages of his Holy Ordinances. No less than this is asserted, Amos 8. 11, 12. *Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a Famine in the Land, not a Famine of Bread, nor a thirst of Water, but of hearing the Words of the Lord. And they shall wander from Sea to Sea, and from the North even to the East shall they run to and fro, to seek the Word of the Lord, and shall not find it.* Thus a Famine of the Word is a forer Judgment than the Famine of Bread; and well indeed it may, since the one destroys only the Body, the other destroys the Soul. If the Light of the Gospel be taken away, worse than *Egyptian* darkness will ensue, such as will cause us to fall, and that into the bottomless Pit, from whence there is no Redemption. Thus I have dispatched the three Generals, and shewn you that 'tis an heavy Judgment to have our *Candlestick removed out of his place*. For this heavy Judgment deprives a Nation of its Chiefest Honour, and makes them become *Lo-ammi*, or no people: It deprives them also of God's special Care and Providence, and renders them an
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ease prey unto their Enemies. And, lastly, it surpasses the forest of God's Judgments; and a Famine of Bread is far more tolerable than a Famine of the Word. These considerations, if any, will teach us to value God's Ordinances at an higher rate than formerly we have, and excite our greatest care and diligence to prevent such an heavy Judgment as this; and to help us to perform this Duty the better, I come in the fourth place,

Fourthly, Briefly to consider some of those Causes which bring such an heavy Judgment upon a Nation. And,

1st. Sin is the General Cause of this heavy Judgment; we need no other proof of this than the Text it self, where Christ bids the Church of *Ephe-sus remember from whence she had fallen, and repent and do the first works.* Nothing but our Iniquities can separate betwixt our God and us; if we do not repent of them they will be our ruin. For God will not continue his Gospel to a backsliding and disobedient People, but will give it away; and give it to a Nation that will better bring forth the Fruits thereof.

2^{ly}. The contempt of God's Word and his Messengers is another Cause of this heavy Judgment. This may easily be gathered from 2 *Chron.* 36. 15, 16. Where we are told, that the Lord God sent to the Jews by his Messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his People, and on his Dwelling Place. But they mocked the Messengers of God, and despised his Words, and misused his Prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his People, till there was no remedy. So *Amos* 8. where the Prophet threatens them with a Famine of the Word, he assigns this among other reasons, *ver.* 5. namely, because they prophaned his Sabbaths, and despised his Ordinances. And indeed when a Nation undervalues the Light of the Gospel, and judge themselves unworthy of it, it is but just with God to remove their Candlestick, and carry his Gospel to a People more worthy of it.

3^{ly}. Schisms and Divisions are another grand Cause of this heavy Judgment. Historians tell us, that this was it which opened the way to the Turks and

and *Saracens* to overflow the Eastern Churches, and let *Mahometanism* into the World. It was this which brought that deluge of *Goths* and *Vandals*, and other Barbarous Nations upon the *West*: And indeed we need not wonder at it, since *James* tells us, Chap. 3. 16. *That where envying and strife is, there will be confusion and every evil work.* Thus I have dispatched the fourth General, and shewn you some of those Causes which provoke God to remove his Candlestick from a People and Nation. Sin in the General is the Cause of it: In particular the contempt of God's Messengers and his Ordinances, and those Schisms and Divisions which rage in a Nation: And if we should now reflect upon our selves, I fear we should find so much wickedness and debauchery raging in the Land; such gross profanation of God's Sabbaths, contempt of his Messengers and his Ordinances, and withall so many dangerous Schisms and Factions amongst us, as may justly cause us to dread the heavy Judgment of the Text. But I will not foretell your danger, but exhort you to prevent it, and that by Repentance

penitance as the Text directs. Which

Fifthly, Brings me to the fifth and last General proposed, which is, to shew you the Means to prevent this heavy Judgment. Now this cannot better be learned, than from that advice Christ gives the Church of *Ephesus* in this place, *remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works*. Repentance therefore is the best means we can take to appease God's Wrath, and prevent his Judgments. If we repent of the evil of our ways, God also will repent of the evil we have reason enough to fear he is bringing upon us. Hear what is said to this purpose in the Prophet, Jer. 3. 12. *Return, O backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you, for I am merciful*. What a gracious motive in here urged? What will persuade us to repent, if the hopes of Mercy will not? In what a sad condition would we be, if God should remove our Candlestick out of his place; if he should take away his glorious Gospel from us, and deprive us of all the advantages and privileges of his holy Ordinances? Indeed

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our sins call aloud for such heavy Judgments. Our Superiors both in Church and State have acknowledged for us, that prophane Swearing, Perjury, Drunkenness, and a violation of God's Sabbath, have sadly made this Land to mourn. And may we not add, a great contempt of God's Word, a misusing of Messengers, a slighting of his Ordinances, besides those Factions and Schisms which abound among us? And may not God justly visit for these things? Oh then it is time that we should all smite upon our Breasts, and return unto the Lord with humiliation and repentance, that our iniquities may not be our ruin. But every kind of Repentance will not serve the turn: the Greek word in the Text is *μετένοια*, which *Lactantius* translates *mutationes mentis in melius*, that is, a change of the Mind from worse to better; not a change of the Looks, or hanging down the Head like a Bullrush, for all this may be done by a Pharisee or an Hypocrite. It is not a change of our Apparel, or a putting on of Sackcloth; for such humiliation and repentance may be performed by a wicked *Ahab*; but the

the Repentance of the Text denotes a real change of the Mind; or as the Prophet *Joel* describes it, *a turning unto the Lord with all our Hearts*, Chap. 2. 12. Such a Repentance as this, will make us fruitful in every good word and work, and pay' an universal Obedience to all God's Commandments; it will make us reform our Lives, honour God's Gospel, value his Ordinances, and have no hand in the incouraging those Schisms and Divisions which are amongst us: This is the Repentance Christ recommends; and if it be carefully, practised by us, we may prevent the heavy Judgment of the Text, and procure the continuance of the Gospel amongst us; which God Almighty grant for the sake of Jesus Christ, &c.

*The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the Love of God, &c.*

S E R M O N III.

2 Pet. iii. 18.

But grow in Grace.

IT is a Famous Dispute among Papists and Protestants, where St. Peter was when he wrote this and his former Epistle : The Papists would have him to be at Rome, that they may the better establish their Papal Monarchy, and derive the Succession of their Bishops from that great Apostle. But St. Peter himself tells us that he was at Babylon 1 Pet. 5. 13. *The Church that is at Babylon elected together with you, saluteth*

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teth you. Indeed St. *John*, in his Book of *Revelations*, takes *Babylon* in a mystical sense for *Rome*, which well became his prophetick and mystical style; but there is no reason to believe that St. *Peter*, who, in these Epistles writes no Propheſie, but only plain Instructions for the diſperſed *Jews*, ſhould take *Babylon* in any other than a Literal Senſe, namely for that Antient and Famous City which was the Metropolis of *Chaldea*; and indeed there are ſundry Arguments to induce this belief. As,

First, St. *Paul*, who about this time wrote his Epistle to the *Romans*, makes no mention at all of St. *Peters* being then at *Rome*, notwithstanding he ſends Commendations to all that were of Eminency in the Church.

Secondly, It is agreed on by both Pa-piſts and Proteſtants, that the Apoſtle-ſhip of the *Jews* was in a peculiar manner committed to St. *Peter*, as that of the *Gentiles* was to St. *Paul*. This St. *Jerom* calls *Principale Mandatum*, the main of their Commiſſion; from whence it neceſſarily follows, that St. *Peters* chief imploymment muſt be where the greateſt numbers of *Jews* were. Now

it is certain that *Babylon* in *Chaldea* was the place where the *Jews* resided in greatest numbers after their Captivity.

Thirdly, *St. Peter* directs his Epistles to the *Jews* scattered throughout *Pontus*, *Galatia*, *Cappadocia*, *Asia* and *Bithynia*, which all belonged to the Jurisdiction of the Patriarch of *Babylon*.

Fourthly, *St. Peter*, writing to these dispersed *Jews*, rehearseth several Nations where they resided, as *Pontus*, *Galatia*, *Cappadocia*, *Asia* and *Bithynia*, but leaves out *Chaldea*, where they resided in greatest numbers, which he would never have done, had not *Chaldea* been the place from whence he wrote these Epistles. I shall add but one Argument more, from *Acts* 18. 2. where we are told, that *Claudius Cæsar* commanded all the *Jews* to depart from *Rome*; so that we may conclude *St. Peter* would not keep his residence there, where he wanted his Flock committed to his Charge; and therefore it is more rational to believe he resided at *Babylon*, where vast numbers of the *Jews* resided also. I have premised thus much to prove that *St. Peter* wrote these two Epistles from *Babylon*

bylon in Chaldea ; because it will follow from hence , that the Papists have not one Text of Scripture to found their belief of *St. Peters* being at *Rome*, tho' on it depends their whole Papal Monarchy : For this is the only Text they pretend to, and you see how little it makes for their purpose ; so that they have nothing but Human Testimony to build this great Article of their Faith upon, and that such as is derived from *Papias*, a weak , credulous person, as *Eusebius* styles him. By this time you will in some measure understand the Place from which , and the Persons to whom *St. Peter* writes ; and being shortly, as he tells them, *to put off his Earthly Tabernacle*. we need not doubt the excellency of those Instructions he bequeaths to the *Jews* : All which he concludes with the most important words of the Text, *Grow in Grace*. For the better understanding of which,

First, We will first consider the Duty it self , *Grow in Grace*.

Secondly, We will inquire what is that degree or stature of Grace a Christian must grow to before he can assure himself of Eternal Salvation.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, Whether any farther growth in Grace be attainable in this Life.

Fourthly, What Reasons and Encouragements we have to endeavour after the highest degrees of Grace. I begin with the first of these.

First, Namely to consider the Duty it self, which is to *Grow in Grace*. A Christians life must be a continual progress in Holiness; he must not with *Hercules*, erect his Pillars, and write a *non ultra* upon them, saying hitherto will I go and no farther: For true Grace is of a growing and multiplying Nature; so that the good Christian must not be content with his present attainments, but with *St Paul*, he must always be pressing forward, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before. To this purpose is that Character *Solomon* gives of the Just Man, *Prov. 4. 18. The Path of the Just is as the shining Light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect Day.* He is not like *Joshuabs* Sun that stood still in the Firmament, much less like *Hezekiabs*, which went ten degrees backward; but he is like *Dauids* Sun which cometh forth as a Bridegroom out
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of his Chamber, and rejoyceth as a Giant to run his Race. Now this growth in Grace denotes at least these two Blessings.

First, the getting all sorts of Graces. And,

Secondly, Serious endeavours after the highest degrees of them.

First, This growth in Grace denotes the getting all sorts of Graces. It is a known Maxim in Philosophy, *omnis a tota augetur quaelibet pars*, in the Natural Growth of Plants, when the whole increaseth, every part increaseth also; and the Maxim holds in Spiritual Growths too: For all the Faculties of the Soul are improved together, and the New Creature must be adorned with all sorts of Virtue. To this purpose is that saying of Cicero, *Omnes virtutes inter se nexæ conjugatæque sunt*, all the Virtues, saith he, are linked and joined together, so that he that has one, must have them all. Hence we find Christ's Spouse in the Canticles, compared to a pleasant Garden, which is adorned with great variety of Flowers, and perfum'd with all sorts of Eragrant Spices; thus the Kings Daughter must be all Glorious within. The good Christian that will grow in Grace

Grace must be possessed of all sorts of Virtues, according to that exhortation our Apostle gives, Chap. 1. 5. *Give all diligence, saith he, and add to your Faith, Virtue; and to Virtue, Knowledge; and to Knowledge, Temperance; and to Temperance, Patience; and to Patience, Godliness; and to Godliness, Brotherly Kindness; and to Brotherly Kindness, Charity.* All these Virtues must dwell together; and that man hath none of them, who has them not all in some degree and measure. But,

Secondly, This Growth in Grace, as it denotes the getting all sorts of Virtues; so it denotes our serious endeavours after the highest degrees of them. As the growing Christian must add Virtue to Virtue, and pile one Grace upon another; so he must not sit down with some lower attainments, but advance to the highest pitch and degree of every Grace. I need not tell you that there are several degrees in every Grace and Virtue, the number of which is variously reported by Learned Men. *Aristotle*, that Prince of Philosophers, reckons but eight; *Gregory the Great*, fifteen; *Johannes Climachus* doubles the

number, and makes them thirty. But these Great Men do all fall short of the truth, for there cannot be fewer than infinite degrees in every Virtue; seeing God Almighty possesses them all in infinite degrees of perfection. Now this is the Pattern which is proposed to the Christians imitation: For as our Saviour speaks, he must endeavour to be perfect even as his Heavenly Father is perfect. Sure then he must endeavour to grow very high, who is to grow as high as Heaven; he must not be content with low attainments, who is to imitate the Infinite Perfections of the Divine Nature. Thus the Righteous must hold on in his way, and he that hath clean Hands, must wax stronger and stronger, according to the advice of *St. Jerom*; it must be his constant study to *grow in Grace* as he grows in years. Like the Vine to which the Holy Ghost so frequently compares him, he, must know no other period of his growth, than that of his Life; and like *Caleb*, must be active and vigorous, even at eighty years of age. The serious Christian still finds something that needs to be amended; something also decayed he must
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must be careful to repair, and something not yet attained he must press hard after. As the diligent Bee flies from Flower to Flower, that it may gather greater plenty and abundance of Hony; so the serious Christian goes from Duty to Duty, and from Ordinance to Ordinance, out of a longing desire to gain higher degrees of Grace. To this purpose is that Character the Psalmist gives of a Righteous Man, Psal. 92. 12, &c. *The Righteous shall flourish like the Palm-tree; he shall grow like a Cedar in Lebanon; those that be planted in the House of the Lord, shall flourish in the Courts of our God. They shall still bring forth Fruit, yea even in Old Age; they shall be fat and flourishing.* What elegant and significant Expressions are these! Here is not only mention of Growing, but of Flourishing too; and here is Flourishing mentioned no less than three times; and it is the Flourishing not of an ordinary Tree, but of a Palm tree, which is famous for its Flourishing under the heaviest burdens: Nay further, it is flourishing like a Cedar, and that not grow in a barren Wilderness, but in *Lebanon* it self, where the Best, the Goodliest,

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the Tallest Cedars grew : Nor is he said only to Flourish in Boughs and Leaves, but also in Fruit ; and that not for one year only ; but the Righteous Man is still bringing forth Fruit, and that not only in the years of his Youth, or the beginning of Grace, but in Old Age too. What a Divine Climax, what an Elegant Gradation is here used by the Holy Ghost to represent the continual growings of a Righteous Man in Virtue ! He is still climbing higher and higher, till he climbs as high as Heaven. Thus have I considered the Duty it self, *Grow in Grace.* And come now in the second place,

Secondly, To enquire what is that Degree or Stature of Grace a Christian must grow to, before he can assure himself of Eternal Salvation. I have shewn already, that the degrees of Grace and Virtue are no less than infinite ; so many indeed, that the best of Christians may more easily endeavour after them, than ever perfectly acquire or attain them. But notwithstanding all this, there are certain degrees of Grace, which must be attained to, before a Christian can have any comfortable assurance of his
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Eternal Salvation. There is such a state of Holiness and Perfection he must grow to in this Life, before he can have any evidence of his Title to a better Life. Now for your better information in this important Point, I shall shew you these two things.

First, That there is a certain growth in Grace attainable in this World, which is sufficient to assure us of Eternal Salvation.

Secondly, What this saving growth in Grace imports.

First, Let me shew you, that there is a certain growth in Grace attainable in this World, which is sufficient to assure us of Eternal Salvation. *Solomon* tells us, *Prov. 4. 18* That the Path of the Just is as the shining Light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect Day. There is therefore a perfect day of Grace the Just Man may arrive at; and this will receive farther light from those Elegant Expressions of our Apostle, *2 Pet. 1. 19*: We have, saith he, a more sure word of Prophecie, whereunto ye do well, that ye take heed, as to a Light shining in a Dark Place, until the Day dawn, and the Day-Star arise in your

Hearts. It is plain from hence, that the Day Star of Grace doth arise in the Hearts of Believers in this Life, such as will be sufficient to bring us to Heaven. It is yet a clearer proof of this, which you'll find *Ephes. 4. 11.* where St. Paul tells us, that Christ at his Ascension gave *Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers*, for the edifying of the Church, and the perfecting of the Saints, till we all come in the unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect Man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: From hence it is plain, that there is a just and full stature Christians may grow to in this Life; they may come to the Perfect Man, that is, to such degrees of Grace, to such a state of Evangelical, tho' not Legal or Absolute Perfection, as will be sufficient to carry them to Heaven. As in natural growths Men have a fixt and determinate stature to which they arrive; so in spiritual growths there is a certain stature too, which, when we arrive at, we become perfect Men, and Compleat Christians, that is, such as are infallibly in a state of Salvation.

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Thus I have shewn you, that there is a certain growth of Grace attainable in this Life, which is sufficient to assure us of Eternal Salvation. I come now in the second place to shew you, what this saving growth in Grace imports, and that both Negatively and Positively. And,

1st It doth not import an absolute freedom from all sin, but is consistent with sins of ignorance and infirmity. There is no state of absolute Perfection on this side the Grave; for there is Dung in all our Sacrifices, and our very Righteousness is as filthy Rags. As the best Grain hath its Chaff; and the brightest Marble its Spots and Flaws; so the best of Christians want not a mixture of sin; and the highest Saints have some alloy of Original Corruption. Hence *Salomon* tells us, that *the justest man falls seven times a day*; and *St. John*, tho' the beloved Disciple, comprehends himself in those expressions of his, *1 John* 1. 8. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive our selves, and the Truth is not in us.* Plain therefore it is, that sins of ignorance and infirmity are consistent with this saving growth in Grace.

2/y. This saving growth in Grace, is also consistent with some falls into wilful and presumptuous sins. Thus David, a man after God's own Heart, was guilty of Pride in Numbring the People; of Adultery also and Murder, which he himself calls presumptuous sins; and yet recovered himself into a state of Salvation, by his timely repentance. Thus also the Prodigal, in the Parable, was upon his repentance, reinstated in his Father's Favour: so that wilful and presumptuous sins, if repented of, are consistent with this saving growth in Grace.

3/y. Saving growth in Grace denotes such an habitual obedience to all God's Holy Laws, as allows no continuance or practice in any known sin. St. John gives a true Character of a Child of God, 1 John 3. 9. *Whoever is born of God, saith he, committeth not sin;* that is, he doth not live in the practice of any known wilful and deliberate sin. And this he illustrates by the contrary Character, of a Child of the Devil, vers. 8. *He that committeth sin, is of the Devil, for the Devil sinneth from the beginning, that is, goes on in a constant trade*

trade and practice of wickedness without repentance. He therefore that is a Child of God, and has attained to a saving growth in Grace, is one that doth not sin after this manner; through the main tenor of his Life he pays a sincere obedience to all the Laws of God; his Actions are generally innocent and laudable; and when at any time, like *David*, he falls into presumptuous sins, as he doth so very seldom, so he always declares his abhorrence of them by a speedy and suitable repentance. Thus I have dispatched the second General, and shewn you what is that degree or stature of Grace a Christian must grow to, before he can assure himself of Eternal Salvation. I come now in the third place to inquire,

Thirdly, Whether any farther growth in Grace be attainable in this Life, than what is just necessary to eternal Salvation: And indeed if it were not so, all God's Saints would be of the same size and stature, they would all be equal as to their degrees and measures of Grace. But tho' all of them have enough to carry them to Heaven, yet there is a difference in their attainments, and some,
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like *Saul*, are taller than the rest by the Head and Shoulders. For every Saint has not the pleriphory or strong Faith of *Abraham*, the meekness of *Moses*, the patience of *Job*, the zeal of *Josiah*, the temperance of *Timothy*, or the diligence of *St. Paul*, who is said to have *laboured more abundantly than the rest of the Apostles*. All indeed have so much Grace as is necessary to Salvation, yet it seems they have not all the same eminent degrees and measures of Grace. Some with their Pound, do only gain five; others by their greater diligence, gain ten pounds, as we have it in the known Parable: And for this reason God is pleased to promise higher degrees of Glory, proportionable to those higher degrees of Grace men attain to in this Life. Some shall have their *Aureolæ*, as the Schoolmen speak, that is, larger Crowns of Glory than ordinary Saints shall wear, and those adorned with peculiar Ensigns of Honour, as *St. Paul* tells us, 2 Cor. 9. 6. *He that soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly; and he that soweth abundantly, shall reap abundantly; both it seems shall reap and receive the rewards of their pious* la-

labours, but yet in different degrees, according to their different services in this World. He that gains but five Pounds, shall be made Ruler over five Cities; whilst he that gains ten Pounds, shall be made Ruler over ten Cities. There is therefore a further growth in Grace attainable in this Life, than what is just necessary to Salvation. The Christian therefore, who has arrived at this saving growth in Grace, is bound still to advance higher, and endeavour after further Improvements in every instance of Virtue: For we are enjoined, not only to do the work of the Lord, but to abound in it; not only to grow in Grace, but also to grow till we be perfect, even as our Heavenly Father is perfect. Here therefore is work enough cut out to imploy all our faculties for ever; and tho' we should be growing in Grace unto all Eternity, we shall still fall short of that Infinite Standard of Perfection, whereunto we are obliged to aspire. But tho' we be not able to reach the Infinite Perfections of God, yet by our greater watchfulness over our selves, by our more frequent Fastings, fervent Devotions, zealous attendance

dance on Ordinances, and eminent works of Charity; by these, and such like Heroick Exploits, we shall more nearly resemble God, and obtain a larger share of Happiness: Whereas those that content themselves with such a lower growth as is just necessary to Salvation, shall not indeed forfeit Heaven, but only those higher degrees of Happiness which are to be enjoyed there. Thus I have dispatched the third General, and shewn you, that there is a further growth in Grace attainable in this Life, than what is just necessary to Salvation: I come now,

Fourthly, In the fourth place to shew you what Reasons and Encouragements we have to endeavour after the highest degrees of Grace. And,

1st. Our serious indeavours after the highest degrees of Grace, will be an excellent means to preserve that saving growth in Grace the pious Christian has already attain'd to: There is a dangerous Opinion in the World, that a man cannot totally and finally fall away from Grace. According to these mens sentiments, he that is once sincerely Righteous, will infallibly hold on and per-

persevere unto the end. Now if this Opinion were true, this exhortation would be vain. But certainly nothing can be more contrary to the plain Doctrine of the Scripture: Hear what St. Peter saith, Chap. 1. of this Epistle, vers. 10. Give all diligence, saith he, to make your Calling and Election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall. You see he puts an *if* in the case, such as fairly implies, that we may neglect our Duty, and fall from our own steadfastness. For the same reason St. Paul gives this necessary Caution, Rom. 11. 20, &c. Be not high-minded, but fear; for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God; on them which fall severity, but towards thee goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. But a fuller confutation of this dangerous Opinion we cannot desire, than what may be gathered from the words of the Prophet, Ezek. 18. 24. When the righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doth, shall

shall he live, saith the Lord? No, At his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned; in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die. Thus plain it is, that a Christian may fall away from that saving state of Grace he has attained to. And what, I pray, is more likely to secure his stedfastness, than serious endeavours after the highest degrees of Holiness? Our Apostle, it seems, thought so; for having in the foregoing Verse given this necessary Caution, *Beware, Brethren, lest you fall from your own stedfastness*; he presently subjoins in the Text, as the properest means to secure them from falling, but *grow in Grace*. It is the same in spiritual growths, that it is in naturals: For as a man by eating and drinking, and other natural Actions, preserves his natural Life; so the Christian, by serious endeavours after higher degrees of Holiness, preserves his spiritual Life. The Musician screws up his Peg to an higher pitch, that he may be sure it will not fall lower than the true Note: Even so the higher degrees of Perfection we aspire to, the less danger shall we be in

in of falling lower, than what is absolutely necessary. And this certainly is sufficient encouragement to continue these our serious endeavours.

2ly. These serious endeavours after a further growth in Grace, than what is absolutely necessary to Salvation, will give the pious Christian a more comfortable assurance of Eternal Happiness. It is no doubt, a kind of Heaven upon Earth to be assured of Heaven whilst we are here upon Earth. This is that hidden Manna mentioned in the *Revelations*, which fills the Soul with all variety of Delights. Now, nothing besides a particular Revelation from Heaven, can be more likely to create this full assurance in the Soul, than these Heroick attainments of Grace and Virtue. Grace is that Seal of the Spirit, by which we are marked and sealed unto the day of Redemption : And certainly the brighter and more evident that Grace is, the more evident will it be to our own selves, and the fuller our assurance of Heaven and Eternal Happiness. Many good Christians are in a safe condition, and yet their condition is not so comfortable, by reason of those fears and

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doubtings, which do often accompany these lower degrees of Grace: But the more we abound in good Works, and the more eminently our Graces shine, the more comfortable will our Assurance be, and the clearer our Title to Heaven and Eternal Happiness. Read St. Paul's 11 Chap. to the *Hebrews*, where he sets down a large Calendar of God's eminent Saints, such as advanc't into the highest form of Piety and Virtue, and you'll find their Faith as great as was their growth in Grace, and their assurances of Heaven bearing a just proportion to their improvements in Holiness. For St. Paul, describing their Faith, *vers.* 1. calls it *the substance, or subsistence of things hoped for; the evidence, or clear demonstration of things not seen.*

3^{ly}. These serious endeavours after the highest degrees of Grace, as they will secure our Title to Heaven, and give us a more comfortable assurance of it for the present; so they will hereafter advance us to higher degrees of Glory in Heaven. We know there are different degrees of Glory in Heaven, even as *one Star differeth from another Star in Glory, sa also, saith St. Paul, shall be*
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the Resurrection of the Just: As St. Austin speaks, *Splendor dispar, Cælum commune*, the Saints shall dwell together in the same Heaven, but yet like Stars, they shall shine with different Rays of Glory. Now these higher degrees of Glory will be conferred on such who arrived at higher degrees of Grace: Hence when our Saviour tells his Disciples, John 14. 2. *In my Fathers House are many Mansions*, Tertullian remarks thus upon the place, *Quomodo multæ Mansiones, si non pro varietate Meritorum?* Wherefore, saith he, should our Saviour mention many Mansions in his Fathers House, if there were not several Rooms of different Size and Glory provided for his Saints, according to the variety of their deserts? Indeed Heaven has room enough to lodge all the Godly; but as in other Magnificent Palaces, so in this of Heaven, there are higher and lower, larger and lesser Mansions, in which God's Saints shall be disposed of according to those Services they have performed upon Earth. Their Rewards hereafter shall be answerable to their Obedience here. See then what encouragement there is to endeavour after

the highest degrees of Glory. These it seems, will create an Heaven in our Souls whilst we live here on Earth. These will at our Deaths, carry our Souls as high as Heaven; nay, which is more, they will lodge them in the best Mansions there. Hence is that of our Apostle, *Chap. 1. 11. If these things be in you, and abound, then shall an entrance be ministred unto you abundantly, into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* Having therefore these Promises, Dearly Beloved, let us cleanse our selves from all Filthiness both of Flesh and Spirit, perfecting Holiness in the fear of the Lord. Let us go from Strength to Strength, and grow from one degree of Grace unto another, untill we appear before our God in *Sion*. I shall conclude all with *St. Pauls* exhortation, *1 Cor. 15. ult. Wherefore, my beloved Brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know, that your Labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.* This, God of his Infinite Mercy grant unto us all, for the sake of Jesus Christ, &c.

S E R M O N I V .

Pfal. lxxvi. 10.

*Surely the wrath of man shall
praise thee ; the remainder
of wrath shalt thou re-
strain.*

THIS Psalm is confessed
by all, to be a Psalm of
Thanksgiving, a Song
composed to perpetuate
the Memory of some won-
derful and extraordinary Deliverance:
But what this Deliverance was, is not so

well agreed on by Interpreters. Some would have it to be a Psalm of *David*, penn'd to commemorate those Victories he obtain'd over the *Philistins*, the *Moabites* and the *Syrians*; others would have the occasion of it to have been the discomfiture of that formidable Army which was brought up by the *Ethiopians*, in the days of *Asa*; but most understand it of that remarkable defeat, which was given by the Angel to *Sennacherib's* Army, in the reign of *Hezekiah*. Upon this account the LXX inscribe it ὡδή πρὸς τὸν Ἀσσύριον the Latin, *Canticum ad Assyrios*, that is, an Ode or Song made upon the *Assyrians*. And this Interpretation will receive further Light from those words of vers. 5. *The stout-hearted are spoiled. they have slept their sleep, and none of the men of might have found their hands.* The *Assyrian* was now an Universal Monarch, his Soldiers were reputed the stoutest hearted in the World, having made their Valour renowned by their innumerable Conquests; but yet notwithstanding all this, when they brought a formidable Army against *Jerusalem*, their Numbers and their Strength did signifie nothing;

thing ; for the Angel of the Lord went forth, and in one Night slew 185000 men in the Camp of the Assyrians, 2 Kings 19. 35. They indeed slept their sleep ; and the opinion of their own strength, and Hezekiahs weakness, made them secure ; but in the midst of their security, God smote them in the night-time by his Angel ; so that the Mighty Men of Valour slept indeed, but it was the sleep of death, for they never awaked again, never found their Hands. Hence we read 2 Chron. 32. 21. *That the Captains, the Leaders, and all the Mighty Men of Valour were cut off in the Camp of the King of Assyria.* Thus the God of Israel, who had been blasphemed by the Assyrians, vindicated his own Honour, by this wonderful overthrow, and his Servant Hezekiah, who was delivered, became Famous and Renowned amongst the Nations. Hence we read 2 Chron. 32. 23. *That many brought Gifts unto the Lord, unto Jerusalem, and Presents to Hezekiah, King of Judah ; so that he was magnified in the sight of all Nations from thenceforth.* Thus the wrath of Man did praise the Lord ; the remainder of wrath he did restrain.

Before I can draw from the Words, such Observations as the Solemnity of the Day will require, I must bestow some little explication on them.

First, *The wrath of Man*, the Hebrew word is *Chamath*, and properly signifies Rage. Tho' Anger, Wrath and Rage be often in Scripture used promiscuously, yet sometimes they are distinguished; and indeed a real difference may be found between them. For Anger is the boiling of the Blood about the Heart, a Fever darted into the Veins, which causes a Violent Commotion in the Spirits. Wrath is the manifestation of this inward distemper by Looks, or Gestures, or Actions tending to Revenge. But Rage is the height or extremity of both the former; it causes the Heart to study Destruction, to meditate and contrive the utmost of Mischief and Villany, and the outward Man to watch all opportunities of putting it in Execution, and that with the greatest depth of Malice and height of Fury. One would think this one word had been sufficient to express that Hellish Malice which the Wicked bear against the Church of God. But what is *Chamath* in the beginning

of the Verse, is *Chemoth* in the close : What was put in the singular number, is afterwards put in the plural ; for so the words should be rendred *the wrath of Man shall praise the Lord ; the remainder of wraths or rages shalt thou restrain.* The Rage of the Wicked is not small ; their Fury does not terminate in one Plot, but it is exceeding great , ever working and multiplying by continuance ; so that there is not any Design so Barbarous, any Conspiracy so Bloody or Devilish, which their Rage will not put them upon ; if one Plot fail, they are ready for another ; and like the troubled Sea, they never rest, but are still casting up Mire and Dirt : Well then might the Psalmist call them Rages in the plural number ; they are as *Gad*, a *Troop* ; or if you please, you may call their Name *Legion*, they are so many. But,

Secondly, It is called *the wrath of Man*, in the Hebrew , *the wrath of Adam*. This Livery can fit the Shoulders of none but a very wicked Man, one that is descended from the First *Adam*, and is not yet ingrafted into the Second. But yet it is some comfort, that he is
but

but a Man, whose Heart is filled with all this Rage; we may be safe it seems, so long as the God of Heaven is on our side: He can restrain all this wrath, he can make it turn to the benefit of his People, and his own Glory. The LXX are very ingenuous upon the last words of my Text; for what we translate *the remainder of Wrath shalt thou restrain*, they render *ἐσπρίζεις αὐτόν*, *the Rage of Man shall keep Holy Day unto the Lord, and give his People opportunity to Laud and Magnifie his Glorious Name*. By this you cannot but understand how well the Text and the Day will agree. We shall in the Day, as well as in the Text find Anger, and Wrath, and Rage yea Rages in the plural number. And tho' our Adversaries call themselves Christians, and pretend to be the only Catholicks in the World; yet their Anger will be found to be Fierce and Cursed, their Wrath and Rage, Cruel such as the Psalmist here calls *the Wrath the Rage of Adam, of one that is not yet Regenerate or Grafted into the New Stock*. Their Plots have been many, their Conspiracies Black and Bloody; but thanks be to Heaven, we have found

our Enemies to be but Men, tho' Cruel and Wicked to the height; we have had the experience of God's Power and Goodness over-ruling and restraining their Wrath and Fury; so that if our Gratitude had kept pace with our Mercies and Deliverances, we should have had more days of Thanksgiving in our Calendar than now we have. But to help us a little in the performance of these Duties, which this Solemn Day calls aloud for: I shall observe from the words three Things.

First, That the Rage of the Wicked against God and his People is very great.

Secondly, God by his Providence wonderfully does over-rule the Rage and Malice of Wicked Men. And,

Thirdly, The end that God hath in these Providences, is his Praise and Glory; *surely the wrath of Man shall praise thee.*

First, The Rage of the Wicked against the People of God is very great. This is the very Nature and Disposition of Wicked Men, as the Psalmist tells us, Psal. 37. 12. *The Wicked plotteth against the Just, and gnasheth upon him with his Teeth.*

Teeth. Nay, so great is their Malice, that the Holy Ghost in Scripture, compares them to *Fire and Water*, to *Briars and Thorns*, to *Lions, Bulls, Dogs, Unicorns, Wolves*; and the like. You'll find this Truth also confirmed by a thousand Examples: How did *Cain* hate his Brother *Abel*? What wrath did boil in *Esa* against *Jacob*? How cruelly were the *Israelites* treated by the *Egyptians*? I should be too prodigal of the time should I reckon up all those Examples of Holy Writ which are recorded for this purpose: I shall therefore content my self at present, with the Example of *Sennacherib*, to which the Text, as you hear, alludes. Now how did this Bloody Emperor swell with Rage, how full was his Heart of Wrath! The Prophet *Esa*, speaking of this proud *Assyrian*, Chap. 10. 7. tells us, *that it was in his Heart to destroy and cut off Nations, not a few*. And what the Prophet avers of him in the general, is confirmed more particularly of him by *Berosus*, an Antient Historian, which has left this Character of him, *Sennacherib, qui apud Assyrios regnabat omnem Asiam & Egyptum Bello infestabat*; *Sennacherib*, saith he, King of the Assy-

Affyrians, infested all Asia and Egypt with War. But tho' other Nations felt the weight of his Wrath, yet none more than the People of God. For the Scripture tells us, that he waged War three years together with the King of Israel, whom he took at last, and carried him, with the ten Tribes into the Land of Captivity. Eight years after this, his Rage brake forth against good *Hezekiah*; for we read 2 *Kings* 18. That he came up and seized into his Hands all the frontier Cities of *Judah*: Whilst he was at *Lachish*, one of the frontier Cities, *Hezekiah* sent Ambassadors, and purchased an Ignominious Peace at a very dear rate; for *Hezekiah* was forced to give him all the Silver that was found in the House of God. and in the Treasures of the Kings House; nay, all the Gold that was upon the Doors and upon the Pillars of the Temple: And yet all this would not satisfy his Wrath, but he presently sends *Tartan*, *Rabsaris* and *Rabshakah* with a great Host against *Jerusalem*, and with words of Blasphemy against God himself: Nay, *Rabshakah* threatens the People, that they should be forced to eat their own Dung, and

and drink their own Piss. If all this be not sufficient to shew the Anger, the Wrath and the Rage of this proud *Assyrian*, I shall add one instance of it more out of the Book of *Tobit*, where we find that after the slaughter which the Angel made in *Sennacherib's* Army, he was forced to return home, and dwell at his great City *Niniveh*; his Fury which was stopt at *Jerusalem*, brake forth against the poor *Jews*, the Ten Tribes which were now Captive at *Niniveh*, and therefore *Tobit* tells us, Chap. 1. 18. *That when King Sennacherib slew any of the Jews, after he was fled from Judea; I buried them privily (for, saith he, in his wrath he killed many.)* Here was the remainder of his Wrath, here was that which made it Rages in the plural number: But even this remainder of Wrath did God restrain; for this wicked King was soon after killed by his own Sons, in the House of *Nisroth* his God, as I shall shew you afterwards. And as we have seen Anger and Wrath in the Text, so may we see much more in the Day; and find the Rage of the *Papists*, far exceeding all the Rages of these Barbarous *Assyrians*. It is the saying

saying of St. Gregory, *Dilatat Behemoth Caudam suam in fine Mundi nequius*, which Latin I cannot English better, than in those known words of the Revelations, *Wo unto the Inhabitants of the Earth, and of the Sea, for the Devil is come down with greater wrath, because he knoweth that his time is short.* The Malice of Hell never appeared unto the World with more Rage and Fury, than since it has been managed by the Church of Rome. Who can recount without horror, and detestation, the Barbarous Murders of the *Albigenses*, the Massacres of *France*, the Wars of *Germany*, and the most inhuman Cruelties of the *Spanish Inquisition*? Here is presented a large Field to range in, and a Field of Blood too; but the time would fail me to give a tolerable account of that Wrath and Rage which they have exercised from time to time against this poor Church of *England* since the Reformation. We may justly take up the words of the Psalmist, and say, *Many a time have they fought against us, from our Youth up; yea, many a time have they afflicted us from our Youth, from the beginning of the Reformation,*
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may our Israel say. How many were those Funeral Piles which were kindled by them in the reign of Queen Mary? How well did *Ignatius* deserve his name, which signifies Fire, when several hundreds of Innocent Protestants were sacrificed to the *Moloch* of their Rage, in the space of less than four years? Nay, our late Historian of the Reformation tells us, that like Wild Beasts, they preyed upon the very Carcasses, and dead Bodies of God's Saints, for they digged up the Bones of *Wickliff*, and exercised the utmost of Malice upon the Ashes of *Bucer* and *Fagius*. If we pass on to the reign of Queen *Elizabeth*, our English *Deborah*, we shall find Anger, and Wrath, and Rage enough. Indeed, for well nigh eleven years, they were pretty quiet, hoping to gain Queen *Elizabeth* by their politick flatteries: But as soon as these failed, they erected three Colleges for English Seminary Priests, one at *Doway*, another at *Rhemes*, and another at *Rome*; and indeed these proved the Seminaries of all those Treasons and Rebellions which were acted afterwards. And now the Popes Bulls begin to roar, the Queen is Excommunicated.

cated, her Subjects absolved from their Oaths; and now see their Wrath and Rage in the Rebellion of the unhappy Earls of *Northumberland* and *Westmòrland*, in the Treasons of the *Stanlies* in *Darbyshire*, and of 120 Priests and Jesuits, such as *Sanders*, *Brislow*, *Parsons*, *Campion*, and the like: You may see more of this Rage in the Plots of *Somerville*, *Mayne*, *Nelson*, *Tompson*, and the rest of that Crew; and of *Payne* and his fifty Resolutes, hired by the Pope, to murder the Queen. What need I speak of *Throgmorton*, *Paget*, *Moody*, *Parry*, with several others; when the Invasion of 88 proclaimed their Wrath and Malice to the full? For in their Ships they had great Knives, with this Inscription, (as Bishop *Andrews* reports) *Cut English Throats*; they had also Whips of Cord and Wire, which *Don Pedro de Valdez*, one of the Commanders, confessed were intended to whip us Hereticks to death; and being asked by the Council what they would have done with the young Children, he answered boldly, that all above seven years old should have been murdered with their Parents, the rest should have lived, but they were to be

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branded in the Forehead with the Letter L. signifying *Lutheran*, and so be reserved for perpetual Bondage. These and many other Specimens have they given of their Cruelty, but this days Conspiracy seems to exceed them all. For had this Hellish Plot obtained its desired end, the Metropolis of our Nation had become a flaming *Ætna*, our Church and State been turned into a Chaos, our Court into a *Golgotha*, and our whole Island, into an *Aceldama*, or Field of Blood. Here is more than *Assyrian* Rage and Fury; now at least we see the Rages of the Text, such as we may well call the Wrath of Man, the Wrath of *Adam*, of the worst, the wickedest of Men: For let Men pretend what they will, there is nothing of Religion, nothing of Christ in such Wrath as this, for he would not suffer his Disciples to call for Fire from Heaven to destroy a little Village of the *Samaritans*; whereas these Heathen Catholics, these Bloody Barbarous Papists would have fetched Fire, I cannot fetch from Heaven, but at least from Hell, to have destroyed one of the greatest Cities in the World, but the remainder of his wrath God did restrain. Which brings

me to the second thing proposed, namely,

Secondly, That God by his good Providence does over-rule and govern the Wrath and Rage of Wicked Men, so as may be for his own Glory and his Peoples Good. As for the Wicked, they are far from proposing such ends; this proud *Assyrian* in the Text, did not in the least design the Glory of God, or the Good of his People, as the Prophet *Esay* tells us, Chap. 10. 7. *He meant not so, neither did his Heart think so, but it was in his Heart to destroy, and to cut off Nations, not a few.* His Head and Heart were full of devices how to satisfy his Ambition, and raise his Empire on the ruins of other Nations; but God's Providence over-ruled his Ambitious Rage, and made the Wrath of this *Assyrian* to praise him.

But for the fuller opening this part of the Text, we will consider,

First, How God makes the Wrath of Man to praise him.

Secondly, Whom he makes to praise him.

First, Let us us inquire how God makes the Wrath of Man to praise him.

him. Now he doth this several ways
 1st. By diverting their Power and their
 Rage, otherwise than they first intend-
 ed. The Wise Man tells us, *That the*
Hearts of Kings are in the Hands
of God; he turneth them whithersoever
he will, Prov. 21. 1. Thus Nazianzen re-
 ports of *Julian* the Apostate, that when
 he had designed the utter ruin of the
 Christians, God cut him out work else-
 where, and made it necessary for him
 to go first against the *Persians*, by whom
 he was overthrown. So this *Sennacherib*,
 in the Text, you'll find *Esay* 10.
 called but *the Rod of God's Anger,* and
the Staff of his Indignation, to denote
 that the greatest of Men are but a kind
 of Instruments in the Hand of God's
 Providence, and must expect the directi-
 on of a Superiour Cause. Hence it is
 very observable, that when this proud
Assyrian had bent his Rage against *H*
zekiah, it was diverted by *Tirbakah*, the
 King of *Ethiopia*, waging War against
 him, as you may read 2 *Kings* 19. 9. And
 it is easie to parallel this out of the late
 History of the Reformation. For in the
 Reign of *Queen Mary, Gardiner* and o-
 ther Papists, endeavoured to destroy the
 Lab

Lady *Elizabeth*, on whom alone, under God, the hopes of the Reformation did depend. King *Philip* did intercede for her, and preserved her out of interest of State, God putting it into his Heart, to fancy, that if she were put out of the way, and he should have no Issue from Queen *Mary*, which he very much feared; then the Queen of *Scotland*, who was to be married to the *Dauphine*, would succeed, and make too great an auction to the *French Crown*.

2ly. God makes the Wrath of Man to praise him sometimes, by suffering it to proceed so far, till nothing but a Divine Power, an immediate Arm of the Almighty can deliver. God does not always blast the designs of the Wicked in the Bud, or crush their Enterprizes in the Shell; but frequently suffers them to come to the Birth, and his chosen People to fall into great extremity; thus the tale of Bricks was doubled, before *Moses* was sent. Thus *Haman* was allowed to go so far, as even to erect the Gallows for *Mordecai*. Thus *Pharaoh* was allowed to pursue *Israel*, not only to the Banks, but even into the midst of the Red Sea, that by

destroying him there, the Right Hand of the Lord might become more Glorious in Power. And were we not delivered in such a sort this day? Were not all the Instruments of Death made ready? Were not the Barrels lodg'd, the Train laid, the Match burning, and the time well-nigh expired, before the Lord made bare his Arm, and pluckt his People as so many Brands out of the Fire?

3ly. God does sometimes make the Wrath of Man to praise him, by infatuating the Counsels of his Churches Enemies; thus he is said to have made the Princes of Zoan, Fools, and the wise Counsellors of Pharaoh to become brutish. *Isaiah 19. 11.* Thus he Countermined the politick Advice of *Achitophel*, and made that great Oracle appear according to his Name in Hebrew, which signifies the Brother or Cousin-german to a Fool. A like instance of God's Providence was that which hapned in the Reign of Queen *Mary*; for when She first fell into that kind of Dropsie, which Physicians call the *Mola*, the wisest of her Friends and Physicians were so far infatuated, as to conclude

her to be with Child; by this means all Physick was forbid, till her Distemper grew Desperate, and that great Obstacle of the Reformation was happily removed.

4/y. God does sometimes make the Wrath of Man to praise him, by making wonderful discoveries of their most secret Plots and closest Conspiracies. Thus strangely did he discover *Hamans* bloody Plot against the *Jews*, and that of the *Jews* against *St. Paul*: But surely the Goodness of God was never seen more eminently in the discovery of any Plot, than it was this day; for the subtilty of the Serpent did never appear more, than in the managing of this Conspiracy. We know it was laid in the very Bosom of Hell, hammer'd in the Devils Forge, nurs'd up in a dark Vault: We know also that the Traytors bound themselves by the Holy Sacrament, and the strictest Oaths of Secresie not to discover it. But yet how wonderfully did God discover it? For did not the Lord cause one of the Conspirators, notwithstanding he had taken three solemn Oaths to conceal the Plot, to reveal it by Writing, verifying that of the Wise

Man in his *Ecclesiastes*, *That which has Wings shall tell the Matter* ? Nay further, was it not the over-ruling Providence of God which inclined the Heart of that Noble Lord to communicate the Letter, which otherwise might easily have been slighted as the off-spring of some melancholy Brain ? Nay, was it not our merciful God, who at this time put a Divine Sentence into the Lips of the King, and suffer'd not his Mouth to transgress in Judgment ? His Royal Breast, at other times, used to be free from Jealousie, accounting it no less than a Badge of Tyranny : But now Providence so ordered it, that by an unnatural construction of an *Ænigmatical Phrase*, he discovered that unnatural destruction which was hatching by his Enemies.

5^{ly}. God does sometimes make the Wrath of Man to praise him, by inflicting some extraordinary Judgments upon the Enemies of his People. *The Lord is known, saith the Psalmist, by the Judgment he executeth; the Wicked is snared by the work of his own Hands*, Psal. 9. 16. Thus God also chastised the Wrath of *Sennacherib* at the siege of *Jerusalem*, by sending his Angel to destroy

185000 of his Army : And tho' *Sennacherib* himself was spared, that he might the better know the Power of that God, whom he had Despised and Blasphemed ; yet because he was not throughly reformed by this first Judgment, but his Wrath still remained when he came to his chief City *Niniveh*, where he fell to persecute the Ten Tribes which were captive there, God restrained this remainder of his Wrath by another signal Judgment, and made him die an ignominious Death by the Hands of his two Sons, and that in the House of his own God, whom he had blasphemously opposed to the great *Jehovah*, but was not able to protect him from the Hand of his Almighty Vengeance. And did not God also Glorifie himself thus, by those strange Judgments which he executed on the Powder-Traytors ? Was it not remarkable what hapned at *Holbeach* in *Worcestershire*, where some of this days Conspirators, being drying Powder to make Resistance, one spark of Fire lighting accidentally amongst the Powder, wounded them so sadly, that they were forced to acknowledge the Justice and Vengeance of God upon them

them by that Powder, wherewith they had intended the Destruction of so many? After this, *Catesby* and *Piercy*, two Principal Conspirators, were accidentally shot to Death by one Shot of a Musquet; and so fell by the Hand of God, taking revenge on them by Powder, before the Justice of Man was able to seize them. Add to this what we read in King *James's* Works, how that God did secretly exasperate the Spirit of all Men against these Popish Traytors, that in the Countries where they wandered, some of them were killed, others taken before any Proclamation could overtake them, and before the People who seized them, knew any thing of this particular Treason. Thus God this day *did make the Wrath of Man to praise him*, to praise his Justice, his Power in executing such strange Judgments upon these bloody unnatural Traytors. But it is time I should shew you in the second place,

Secondly, Who they are God makes to praise him.

I shall name two sorts of Men.

1st. God by such means as these makes his very Enemies to praise him

by acknowledging either his Power or his Justice in their Punishments. Thus *Pharaoh* and the *Egyptians* acknowledged God's Power in the Red Sea, when they cried out, *Let us flee from the Face of Israel, for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians*. It is very remarkable what *Herodotus* reports of *Sennacherib*, the burthen of the Text; namely, that he had a Statue erected after his Death, with this good Advice engraven on it, *Whosoever looketh upon me, let him learn to be Pious, and to fear God*. So *Julian*, the Apostate, acknowledged the Power of Christ, crying out at his death, *Vicisti Galilæe, Thou art too strong for me, O thou Galilean*. What Confessions and Acknowledgments has God also extorted from our Romish Adversaries! *Don Pedro* seeing the terrible dissipation of that invincible Armado which was sent in 88, professed, that now he perceived that God was turned *Lutheran*. And on this very day, *Faux* who was appointed to be the Black Executioner, and *Garnet* the Priest, that was to Consecrate the Plot, did confess to the praise of God, as well as the rest at their Execution, the outrageous wicked-

wickedness, and odiousness of their Hellish design. But.

2ly. God does more especially receive Honour and Praise from his own People, whom he wonderfully delivers from the Rage of Wicked Bloody Men: Thus *Israel*, when they saw the *Egyptians* dead upon the Shore, they sang praise unto God, proclaiming him fearful in praises and doing wonders: Thus *Hezekiah* sent this Psalm to the chief Musician on *Neginoth*, that solemn Praises and Thanksgivings might be returned unto God, for their wonderful deliverance from the Rage of *Sennacherib*. Even so Religious King *James* did erect this day for a Pillar of Gratitude to our good God, who did so miraculously preserve our King, the Royal Family, the Parliament, with our Laws, Liberties and Religion: Let us therefore rejoyce in the Lord, and again I say rejoyce; let us rouse up our Spirits, call up our Hearts, and let all that is within us bless his Holy Name. Sure if God extort praises from his very Enemies, he may more justly inhabit the praises of his own People, those that he has so wonderfully preserved: Nay, consider how he has re-
strained

strained also the remainder of Wrath; How many Plots of these Blood thirsty Papists he has since defeated. If it had not been the Lord, who was on our side, when Men rose up against us, they had swallowed us up quick, when their Wrath was kindled so hot against us: Let us therefore bless the Lord our God, who has not given us over as a prey unto their Teeth. And to help us a little in the performance of this Duty, I shall conclude all with these two following Directions.

First, If you praise God aright for the Mercies of this Day, you must be zealous for that Church, which God has hitherto so wonderfully preserved. You have heard how that because God had so wonderfully preserved *Hezekiah* from the Fury of *Sennacherib*, they brought Presents unto him, and he was magnified in the sight of all Nations from thenceforth. How ought we then to magnifie that Church which God has magnified! How precious, how honourable ought it to be in all our Eyes, which God has honoured with so many Miracles! We know this Church is the greatest Eyesore of *Rome*; and to use the words of the

the Author of the Review of the Council of Trent, 'There have not been more woful Tragedies of the Papal Fury acted upon any Stage, than this of *England*: Yet how has God all along restrained their Wrath? Well then may we own that Church, and be zealous for her, whom God has so signally owned, and been at the expence of so many Miracles to preserve. But.

Secondly, The Life of Thankfulness does chiefly consist in the Lives of those that are Thankful. He that ordereth his Conversation aright, is said to glorifie God, in this Book of Psalms. If after such wonderful deliverances, as you have heard this day, we still indulge our selves in sin, our most costly Sacrifices will prove an abomination; the Lord will even spread the very Dung of them on our Faces: See therefore with what passion *Ezra* exhorts the *Jews* to this Duty after their Deliverance from the *Babylonish* Captivity, *Ezra* 9. 13. *When we have received such deliverance as this, should we again break thy Commandments, wouldst thou not be angry with us, till thou hadst consumed us? We must therefore keep holiness in our Lives,*

Lives, otherwise we shall not be fit to keep an Holy-Day to the Lord. It becometh well the just to be thankful; let the high praises of God be in their Mouths, and it will please him better than a Bullock that has Horns and Hoofs. Let us therefore reform our Lives, and being thus wonderfully delivered from the Hands of our Enemies, let us serve without fear, inholiness and righteousness before him all the days of our Life; which God of his Infinite Mercy grant, &c.

SERMON

S E R M O N V.

I Cor. xi. 19.

For there must be also Heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

COrinth being seated on the Peloponnesian Isthmus, had the advantage both of the Ionian and Ægean Sea, to bring into its Bosom all the Treasures of the World: And indeed these Temporal Blessings flowed there in such great

great abundance, that *Corinth* is styled by *Homer* ἀφνειή, and by *Pindar* ὀλυσία, that is, in plain English, the Rich and Happy City of *Corinth*. And as *Corinth* was thus happy in respect of its Trade and Commerce, so it was much more happy in having the Gospel planted there by the great Apostle *St. Paul*. It was accounted the honour of these Primitive Churches to have some Apostle or other to be their Founder; and the more eminent the Apostle was, the greater was the honour of the Church he planted. Now in this respect *Corinth* was inferior unto none, as being founded by *St. Paul*, the great Apostle of the *Gentiles*; one who is sometimes styled by the Antients, Prince of the Apostles; and who in that modest Character which he has left of himself in *2 Cor. 11. 5.* tells us expressly, *That he was not a whit behind the very chiefest Apostles.* The honour therefore of the Church of *Corinth* could not but be great, since it was planted by this great Apostle *St. Paul*: And the honour of it will appear yet greater, if we add the observation of a Learned Author, *Super hac Ecclesia maxime triumphat Paulus,*

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St. Paul, saith he, *tho' he converted several other Nations, and planted several other Churches, yet he seems to glory most, yea even triumph in the Conversion of the Corinthians: These he calls his special work in the Lord, and the very Seal of his Apostleship, Chap. 9. of this Epistle, vers. 1, 2. And as the Church of Corinth had the honour to be planted by the Labours of St. Paul, so it had also the happiness to be watered by the Eloquence of Apollo, and the powerful Preachings of St. Peter. Now one would have thought a Church thus happily Planted and Watered, might, if any in the World, have promist it self an immunity from Schisms and Divisions, at least, so long as these Infallible Apostles and Unerring Guides were still alive: But alas even Infallibility it self is so far from proving an Antidote against Schisms, that it was a great means of raising and promoting them here at Corinth; for in the first Chapter of this Epistle we find them crying out, I am of Paul, I am of Apollo, and I am of Cephas: And besides these Schisms, which took their rise from the eminency of their Teachers; we find in this 11th Chap*

Chapter, several other Divisions about the Sacrament. Unity is indeed a signal Blessing, yet such as the best of Churches may not always enjoy. *Corinth*, as Glorious and Eminent a Church as it was, was rent in pieces by Factions and Divisions; nay, which is stranger yet, *St. Paul*, in the Text, stamps an *Oportet* upon them; *there must*, saith he, *be Heresies*, or as he calls them in the foregoing Verse, *Divisions among you*, Satan and his Instruments will always watch their opportunity to sow these Tares: And God it seems is willing to permit them, that the rottenness of some, and the integrity of others may be discovered. So much *St. Paul* tells us in the Text, *for there must be also Heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you*. From which words I shall endeavour to shew you.

First, That the best of Churches are subject to the Misfortune of Schisms and Divisions.

Secondly, What those Causes are which make Schisms and Divisions in some sort necessary.

Thirdly, That God's design in suffering these Schisms and Divisions is to discover the Rottenness of some, and Integrity of others.

Fourthly, That those are truly Noble and Honourable Persons, who continue stedfast in the Communion of God's Church amidst these Schisms and Divisions which arise in it: These are the *is bonus*, the approved ones in the Text. *There must*, saith St. Paul, *be Heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest.* I begin with the first of these.

First, Namely, to shew you, that the best of Churches are subject to the misfortune of Schisms and Divisions. He must be a very great Stranger both to Scripture and Ecclesiastical History, who does not know, that the misfortune of *Corinth*, in the Text, is the usual fate and misfortune of other Churches. There is not any Church mentioned in the *New Testament*, but what was sadly distracted with Schisms and Divisions. We find at *Galata*, such as preacht up *Judaism*, and bewitched the *Galatians* with a Dangerous Opinion of the necessity of Legal Rites. St. Paul warns the

the *Colossians* of such as were ready to spoil them through vain Philosophy, and bids them take care, that no man be-guiled them in a voluntary humility, and worshiping of Angels. When he wrote his Hierarchical Epistle to *Titus*, the first Bishop of *Crete*, it seems Hereticks were so numerous in that Church, that he was obliged to give him this Apostolical Canon among the rest, *An Heretick after the first and second Admonition, reject.* If we take a view of the Seven Churches of *Asia*, recorded in the Book of *Revelations*, St. *John* will shew us a Synagogue of Satan in the Church of *Smyrna*; *Nicolaitans* and *Balaamites* in the Church of *Sardis*; Hereticks stigmatized with the name of *Jezabel*, in the Church of *Thyatira*; and in *Ephesus*, the Mother Church, Counterfeit Apostles, who said they were Apostles, and were not, but upon trial were found Liars. Tho' the Faith of the *Romans* was at this time so famous, that it was spoken of, saith St. *Paul*, throughout the whole World, yet they were not so happy as to be free from Divisions; for our Apostle gives them this Advise, *Rom. 16. 17. I beseech you, Bre-*

The Fifth Sermon.

*thren, mark them which cause Divisions
 and Offences, contrary to the Dodrin
 which you have received, and avoid them.*
 Thus we have found Schisms and Divi-
 sions in all those Churches which are re-
 corded in the *New Testament*; and if we
 descend to succeeding Ages, we shall find
 Schisms and Divisions too many. Who-
 soever have learning and leisure enough
 to consult *Epiphanius* and *St. Austin*, will
 find them reckoning up no fewer than
 an 100 Heresies, even in those best and
 purest Ages of Christianity. All this,
 I hope, will suffice to prevent any sin-
 ister opinion of the Church of *England*,
 which at this time is torn in pieces by
 Schisms and Divisions: This indeed
 ought to be matter of Lamentation to
 us, and ingage our most ardent prayers
 for the peace of *Jerusalem*. But sure it
 cannot be managed as an Argument
 against our Church, but the blow will
 reach other Churches too, even all
 those Churches which are now in *Chri-*
stendom, and as you have heard, those
 best of Churches which were in the first
 and purest Ages of Christianity. Let
 not therefore our present Divisions les-
 sen your esteem of the Church of *Eng-*
land.

land. The best of Churches are subject to these misfortunes, and will be so to the end of the World. For as our Saviour speaks, Luke 17. 1. *It is impossible but that Offences will come*; And St. Paul. says the same in the Text, where he tells us, *that there must be Heresies*, which brings me to the second General proposed.

Secondly, Namely, to enquire what those Causes are, which make Schisms and Divisions, in some sort, necessary; and here I cannot but assign,

1st. The first and principal place to the infernal Fiends. Satan is the Enemy in our Saviours Parable, who is said to sow these Tares in the Field of the Church. Hence St. Paul calls Heresies the Doctrins of Devils. Ignatius styles them the Plants and Snares of Satan; and to name no more, Epiphanius calls the Arch heretick Arius εἰκών καὶ ἑστῆς τοῦ διαβόλου, that is, the Image and Statue of the Devil. However the Devil labours to keep his own Kingdom in peace and tranquility, yet he seeks nothing more than to cause Divisions in the Kingdom of Christ. The Egyptian, who worshipped of old Dogs and

Cats, and shed penitent Tears before the Shrine of a Deified Onion: The *Pagans* who worship the Sun, Moon and all the Host of Heaven; and the *Mahometans* who worship a cursed Impostor, these never had such divisions among them, as have been, and still are in the Church of Christ. Unity is the strength and stability of all Communities; So that Satan would fight against his own Interest, should he disturb the quiet of those Societies which are devoted to his Service. But the Church of Christ, the purer it is either in Doctrine or in Worship, the more does it threaten ruin and destruction to Satans Kingdom; no wonder then if this subtil Serpent does use all his stratagems and devices to stir up differences and contentions in these Christian Societies. Well then might St. *Cyprian* conclude, that the Schisms and Heresies which hapned in his time, were industriously raised by the Devil, that he might revenge himself on the Christian Religion, which had struck his Oracles dumb, and almost banisht his Worship out of the World. Thus Satan, you see, is the Principal Cause of those Divisions which disturb

disturb the Peace of God's Church; and this, by the way, affords us another Apology for the Church of *England*. We must confess our Divisions are great and sad; but this only argues Satans greater Rage and Malice against her. And I pray what wonder is it, that the Father of Lies should be a malicious Enemy against that Church which is the Ground and Pillar of Truth. But, *Secondly*. Tho' Satan be the Principal Cause of Schisms and Divisions, yet he employs the Lusts and Passions of Men as Instruments to raise them. Hence is that of *St. James*, Chap. 4.1. *Whence are Wars and Fightings among you? Are they not hence, even from your Lusts?* Man before his Conversion is no better than a Centaur, half Brute and half Man: And till Grace has ascended the Throne, he exceeds for Rage and Fury the wildest Inhabitants of the Forest. *Lactantius* compares his Exorbitant Passions to mad furious Horses, which hurry him violently on such things as are mischievous and pernicious to Society. Now Satan works upon these Passions of Men, and raises them as Wind does the Seas, into tumult and commotion; no wonder then

then if St. Paul, Chap. 5. 20. reckons among the Lusts of the Flesh, *Hatred, Variance, Emulation, Strife, Sedition, Heresies and Envyings*: But tho' there be not any Lust which does not contribute more or less to those contentions which happen in the Church; yet *Pride, Covetousness, Curiosity and Self-love* are observed to be the chief *Beautifiers* and *Incendiaries* of them.

1. *Pride* is one great Cause of those *Divisions and Contentions* which happen in the Church. It is as the saying of *Solomon*, Prov. 13. 10. *Only by Pride cometh Contention.* *Melancthon* in his Comment upon the place mentions a famous Proverb to this purpose, *De Montes non miscetur*, two swelling Mountains will not mix well together. When Men begin to swell with *Pride and Ambition*, they soon grow too big for the little Fold of Christ. Thus *Antiochus*, loving the preeminence, disturbed the Peace of the *Asiatic Churches*. Thus *Anius*, priding himself in his skill in *Logick*, sought to ruin his reputation by opposing his *Dioscoran*. *Ambition* is a very turbulent and furious Passion; and if Men once give

the Reins to it, it will make them fire the Temple of God, as *Herodstratus* did *Diana's*, only to get a name, and to be talkt of in the World.

2. Covetousness is another great and special Cause of those Divisions which happen in the Church. Since St. Paul tells us, that the love of money is the root of all evil, we may well conclude it one cause of the evil of Schism; and indeed St. Peter tells us so expressly, 2 Pet. 2. 3. where the Character he gives of Hereticks is this, *Through Covetousness they make merchandise of people with feigned words.* *Mammon* is own'd for a God by the greatest part of mankind; and with most men in the world Gain passes for Godliness. We need not wonder then if the desire of Wealth prove often both the Mother and the Nurse of Heresies. As soon as *Demetrius* had told the Silver-Smiths of *Ephesus*, that their Craft was in danger to be set at naught, they presently fill the City with noise and uproar; and cry out stoutly, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians.* St. Jude describing the manners of the *Gnostick* Hereticks, tells us, they ran greedily after the error of *Balaam* for reward.

ward. St. Cyprian writes of the Heretick Novatus, that he was *Avaritiæ inexplebili rapacitate furibundus*, most insatiably covetous and rapacious, even to a degree of madness. But to name no more, the *Magdeburgenses* long ago observed, that *Covetousness helpt to Spawne most of the Heresies in the World.*

3. Curiosity is another unhappy Cause of Schisms and Divisions. Christ has given us a Rule to walk by; and the Holy Scriptures contain all things necessary to be believed in order to Salvation: And so long as men hold fast that form of sound words which was first delivered to the Church, there can be no danger of Schisms and Divisions. But curiosity makes men desire to be wiser above what is written; and consequently disturb the Peace and Tranquility of the Church. This St. Paul foresaw, when he commanded Timothy to charge some, *That they give no heed to Fables, and endless Genealogies, which minister Questions, rather than Godly Edifying,* 1 Tim. 1. 4. and Chap. 6. 3, 4. he condemns such as dote about Questions and Dispute about Words, whereof cometh *Envy, Strife, Railings and Smises.* 4. Self-

4. Self love is another unhappy Cause of Schisms and Divisions. This is the strongest and most violent Passion of the Soul, and therefore St. Paul gives it the precedence of all the rest, *2 Tim. 3. 2.* It is a true saying of *Luthers*, *Societies would continue longer than they do, if it were not for this little Pronoun Ego, I my self.* For whilst Men prefer their own Interest before the Publick; whilst they seek their own things, rather than the things of Jesus Christ and his Church; they tear his seamless Coat in pieces, and make unhappy Divisions among Christians. To prevent therefore these Divisions, St. Paul gives this Advice amongst others, *Let nothing be done through strife: Look not every man on his own things, but also on the things of others,* *Phil. 2. 3, 4.* Thus I have shewn you what are the Causes of Schisms and Divisions in the Church, and so long as these Causes remain, we must expect the fatal consequences of them; so long as the Devil is allowed to go about as a *Roaring Lion seeking whom he may devour*; so long as he has mens Lusts and Passions to join with him in the Work; so long as he can employ such

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Instruments as the Ambitious, Covetous, Curious and Lovers of themselves, he will be able to disturb the Peace of God's Church. Indeed God has power sufficient to prevent these Divisions; he can create a firm and lasting peace among Christians. But as St. Cyprian speaks, *Fieri hæc Dominus permittit & patitur, manente propriæ libertatis arbitrio*, The Lord, saith he, suffers these Divisions to be in his Church, because he leaves men to act according to the liberty of their Wills. God does not imploy his irresistible power in keeping men from Schism, more than from other sins. But having forbidden it with all the solemnity imaginable, having discyphered the damnable nature of it, and pressed Christians by innumerable, and those most powerful motives to keep this Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace, he leaves them to act for themselves in this, as in other matters, appointing a day in which he will judge and punish everlastingly such as dare to disturb the Peace of his Church. We need not wonder then if men be Traytors to the Church as well as to the State; if they rebel against Christ as well

as against their Prince; seeing God leaves men at liberty to commit this as well as any other sin. Now if any should put the Question, why God leaves men thus to their liberty? Tho' I might chastise such curiosity with *Solomons* Answer, *Eccles. 7. 10.* who tells such Curious Persons, *That they do not enquire wisely concerning this matter;* yet since *St. Paul* has furnisht me with a more satisfactory reply in the Text, I shall return them this Answer in my third General, namely,

Thirdly, That God's design in suffering these Schisms and Divisions, is to discover the rottenness of some, and the integrity of others. This may easily be gathered from the Text, where *St. Paul* tells us, *That there must be Heresies, that they who are approved may be made manifest.* It is a Golden Sentence of *St. Austins*, *That God who is Infinitely Good, would never suffer Evil, but that being also Omnipotent, he is able to extract Good out of Evil.* When God suffers Schisms and Divisions to befall his Church, his design is to discover to the World, the Rottenness of some and the Integrity of others. It may be said
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of Religion; what good old Simeon said of Christ, the Author of it, *It is, for the fall and rising of many in Israel.* So long as Religion prospers and flourishes in the World, Hypocrites and the worst of Atheists will be content to own it. But if at any time it falls into Distress, or labours under Persecution, then they fall off like Leaves in Autumn. Indeed, as St. Cyprian observes, *Nemo existimet bonos Ecclesia posse discedere,* None can imagin, saith he, that Good Men will abjure the Communion of God's Church; as he goes on, the Wind drives not away the solid Wheat, but the Chaff; the Storm may overturn the weaker Shrubs, but the sturdy Oak gains strength and firmness by the Tempest. To the same purpose is that of St. John, 1 John 2. 19. *They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would, no doubt, have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest, that they were not of us.* Times of Division are times of Trial; and do, as the Father speaks, in some sort anticipate the day of Judgment; for at such times the Tares will gather themselves into Bundles, and leave

leave the purer Corn without any mixture in the Field of the Lord: Sound Believers will now be known from Hypocrites; and though the Church may not be crouded with such numbers as it was before, yet its greatest loss will be only of rotten Members: It will now be able to discern its Friends from its Foes: And tho' an *Acacius*, an *Ecebolius*, and such like Changlings, may serve the Times and themselves more; yet all sincere Christians will think it both their Duty and Honour to adhere courageously to the Church of God, which brings me to the fourth General proposed. Namely.

Fourthly, To shew you, that those are truly Noble and Honourable Persons who continue stedfast in the Communion of God's Church amidst these Schisms and Divisions which arise in it. These are the *οἱ δοκιμοι*, the approved ones in the Text. The Greek word which is here rendred Approved, is a Metaphor taken from Gold tried in the Fire. We know such a trial makes its solidity and lustre shine the brighter; yea, it is now valued at an higher rate than it was before. Even so Christians,

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when they continue stedfast amidst Schisms and Divisions, it renders them much more honourable than they were before: There is an advantage, saith *Plutarch*, which men receive from their very Enemies; had there been no *Trojan Wars*, *Hector's* Valour had never been so renowned; and the greater the violence of a Tempest is, the more highly does it commend the skill of the Pilot: Even so the integrity of Orthodox Christians shines the brighter, when others are unsettled by the turn of the Times, or by the crafty subtilties of Schismaticks and Hereticks. And the honourableness of such stedfastness will appear more at large, by these few Particulars.

I. This Stedfastness is an Argument, that men have formerly taken just pains to inform themselves about matters of Religion: As Ignorance is a Stain to Human Nature, so Knowledge, on the contrary, must be the Honour and Glory of it. This is one of the greatest perfections of the Soul, without which, as *Solomon* tells us, the Mind cannot be good; and as Knowledge, in the General, is thus honourable,

ble, so no Knowledge is so Honourable as the Knowledge of Religion. Religion is the chiefest concern of mankind, and consequently ignorance of this is the most shameful brand; and yet such ignorance as this, for the most part, are they guilty of, who prove unfaithful to the Church of God. Hence St. Paul, *2 Tim.* 3. 6, 7. speaking of some who suffered themselves to be perverted by Seducers, he calls the *silly Women*, such as are ever learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the Truth: Nay, elsewhere he styles them *Children in understanding*, who are tossed to and fro with every wind of Doctrine. For a man therefore to be stedfast in the Truth, must needs be Honourable, because it argues him to be a Knowing Man, and that in matters of the highest importance.

2. Stedfastness in Religion must needs be honourable, because it is an Argument of the greatest Wisdom. To be accounted wise is a piece of Honour men have always been covetous and ambitious of; and there are none think they have a better title to it, than such as change their Religion to
1 2 serve

serve their Temporal Interests. Indeed our Saviour tells us, *That the Children of this World, are in their Generation, wiser than the Children of Light.* It must be acknowledged they are wiser as to worldly Affairs; and by renouncing their Religion, they may make better provisions for the remainder of their Life here. But alas! *What is a man profited, if he gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his Soul?* Esau, in the judgment of St. Paul, was a very prophane Person, when he sold his Birth-right for a Mess of Pottage; and Judas made but a sorry Bargain, when for thirty peices of Silver he betrayed his Saviour and his Soul together; such worldly Policy is not the best sort of Wisdom. He is truly the wisest man, who presents his Soul before his Body, Heaven before Earth, and Eternity before a Moment. Now none is such a Wise Man as this, but he who adheres stedfastly to the Church of God, and values his Religion above Estate, Life and all the fading Enjoyments of this transitory World.

3. Stedfastness in Religion must needs be Honourable, because such shall be honoured by Christ in an especial manner. At the day of Judgment God has promised, that those that honour him, he will honour. Now we have no better way to honour God, than by owning his Truth, and adhering to his Church. Religion is the great concern God has in the World, for the Honour and Advancement of which, all those Miracles were wrought which are recorded in the Bible: It is not therefore possible to please God more, than by being true and faithful to Religion. Hear what Honour our Saviour promises to put upon such at the day of Judgement, *Whosoever shall confess me before men, saith Christ, him shall the Son of Man confess before the Angels of God*, Luke 12. 8. However, sincere Christians may be reviled and evil intreated by a wicked World; it seems they will be own'd and honour'd by their Dearest Saviour: and if there be one Crown of Glory larger than another, he will bestow it on such as are faithful to the death. I might, if the time and your patience would per-

mit, add several other Arguments to shew the Honourableness of those Persons who continue stedfast in the Communion of God's Church; but these I am confident will suffice at present. I shall therefore conclude with a word of Exhortation, beseeching you to continue stedfast in the Communion of the Church of *England*. It will not be prudence in me to make any Reflections on other Churches; but this, I hope, may be said without offence, that I know not any Church this day upon Earth, with which we may more safely Communicate, than with the Church of *England*. The Church of *Rome* is deservedly reckoned one of the Ancientest Churches in Christendom; and yet, if we may believe *Baronius*, one of the best of their Historians, the Church of *England* is senior to it more than five years. The Government of this Church is known to be Episcopal; that Government which was instituted by Christ, and was the only Government in the Church for fifteen hundred years after the Times of the Apostles. And as this Church is Governed by Bishops,

so

so we have had a continued Succession of them, from the very beginning, to this present day, as may be learned from *Godwins Catalogue of Bishops*, and *Parkers Antiquitates Britannicæ*. The Faith which our Church professes, may be found in her Creeds, which are the Apostles, the *Nicene*, and the *Athanasian* Creeds; the only Creeds which were owned by the Primitive Church: so that if we may be saved by that Faith which was thought sufficient by the Apostles and the best of Christians, we need not seek a new one from any Church in Christendom. No Church can pretend to more Loyal Principles, or recommend it Self more to the Favour of Princes by the constant Fidelity of its Members, than the Church of *England*. This also is that Church which enjoyed *Lucius*, the First Christian King, and had the honour to have born in it, the First Christian Emperor and Empress, namely, *Constantine* the Great, and the most Religious *Helena*. These are great and signal Honours, such as no other Church is able to boast of; and I shall add one greater than

The Fifth Sermon.

them all, namely, that the Religion of our Church was sealed by the Blood of King *Charles I.* the first Royal Martyr that ever was in the World. This certainly is a Church none of us have the least reason to be ashamed of, and as little reason to be afraid to own; since we are so well assured of their present Majesties Gracious Protection. I shall therefore conclude this Discourse as *St. Paul* does the 15th Chapter of the First Epistle to the *Corinthians*, *Wherefore, my Beloved Brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord; forasmuch as you know that your Labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.*

To God the Father, &c.

SERMON

S E R M O N VI.

Luke xxiii. 39,—43.

And one of the Malefactors, which were hanged, railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thy self and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the re-

reward of our deeds, but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy Kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, to day thou shalt be with me in Paradise.

AS Repentance is owned by all sorts of Christians to be a Duty of absolute necessity, and consequently most seasonable to be performed at all times; so they do not deserve the Name of Christians, who refuse to set about a Duty of such great importance, in this time of Lent. I have already pressed this Duty on you by several Arguments. One you may remember was taken from that Obedience which we owe to our Lawful Superiours. He has not the least spark of Loy-

Loyalty in him, who does not acknowledge our Obedience is due to those Commands of our Superiours which concern indifferent things: And sure then he must not pretend the least tittle to Loyalty, who lives in actual disobedience to the known Commands of his Superiours, when they require things of the greatest importance and most absolute necessity. Now we all know, that our Superiours call upon us to Repent in this season of Lent; and, I hope, we will all acknowledge, that Repentance is a Duty of greatest importance, and most absolute necessity. Where then is that Loyalty we use to boast of? Will he, think you, obey his Superiours in smaller matters, who denies obedience in matters of greatest concernment, and of Eternal importance to his own Soul? But because I know it is easie for some to boast of their Loyalty, when, in truth, they either know not what it means, or at least are unwilling to give the truest demonstrations of it; I have urged other Arguments drawn from the consideration of that Glorious Prize God proposes unto sincere Penitents, and those Dreadful Punishments which

which are threatned the Impenitent. Hope and Fear are the great Hinges on which Human Nature is made to move: And one would think Arguments which alarm two such powerful Passions of the Soul, should not want success, but prevail with sinners of what size soever, to ingage themselves in this important Duty: And yet experience sadly informs us, that neither Heaven nor Hell, neither the Hopes of the one, nor the Fears of the other can persuade the generality of Men to repent of their sins. Sure then there is some considerable Stumbling-block in the way; something more than ordinary that makes men so careless and negligent in the performance of this Duty. And indeed there is a very great Stumbling-block in the way. For tho' all Christians acknowledge Repentance to be a work of absolute necessity; yet they believe it may be done sufficiently when they are a dying. They think they may safely dedicate the fair Blossoms of their Youth to Sin and Satan, provided they are careful to bequeath their Souls to God in their last Will and Testament; and they are highly encouraged to this vain and most dan-

dangerous belief, by the Example of the penitent Thief in the Gospel. For this Reason I have chosen this portion of Scripture at this time; all the Parts of which I do not intend to examine at this time, but only shew you from them these two things:

First, That there is no encouragement at all for a late Death-bed Repentance, in the Example of the penitent Thief. And,

Secondly, From the Example of the Impenitent Thief shew you, that a late Repentance is a thing most dangerous, if not in some sort impossible.

First, Let us Enquire, what little encouragement there is for a late Death-Bed Repentance, in the Example of this penitent Thief. Indeed this famous Story of the penitent Thief, seems at first view to give great encouragement to a late Death-bed Repentance. It is I confess, a Relation of a Dying man, one laden with many and great sins: Sins of such an heinous Nature, as deserved, by his own Confession, the greatest of Punishments, to wit, that of the Cross. As he had spent his whole Life in Robbing and Stealing, sins which seldom want the company

company of other Enormities; so when he was upon the Cross, he joynd also at the first with the other Thief in reviling our Saviour; hence the other Evangelists tell us, in the Plural Number, that *the Thieves reviled him*. So great, so notorious a sinner was this poor Thief, and yet upon his turning to God at the last gasp; upon his humble Confession of his Faults, and expressing his sorrow for them, his Pardon is sealed, the Arms of Mercy open themselves wide to embrace him, and Christ gives him a Promise, that *his Soul should be with him that very day in Paradise*. And since these things are so, who dares now bode ill to the Clinicks of our Age, those I mean, who add *drunkenness to thirst*, and *thirst to drunkenness*, who labour daily to swear God Almighty out of Heaven; who, with Solomon's Young man, *rejoyce all the days of their Youth, walk in all the ways of their own Hearts, and in the sight of their own Eyes*: Why should we, say they, disturb our Mirth and Jollity, with the melancholy Thoughts of Religion? It is time enough to think of Heaven, when we shall be allowed to stay no longer upon Earth! A few salt
Tears

Tears at the Hour of Death, a little Confession to a Priest, attended with sighs and groans, will be a sufficient atonement for our former Miscarriages: God's Mercy, which was sufficient for this penitent Thief, will also serve our turns at the last; and therefore Ministers shall never make us out of love with our darling Lusts; we are not such Fools, as to be cheated so easily of all our Pleasures: Let them, if they can, impose upon Vulgar Hearers, we are too Learned ever to be persuaded to begin so soon to think of Heaven and Eternity. But how sadly, how fatally are such Presumptuous sinners mistaken! Tho' the Text be a Relation of a Dying man returning from great sins to God; yet it is attended with extraordinary Circumstances, such as will make even the boldest Sinner to tremble, and I hope, be so wise, as to make more early Provisions for his Immortal Soul: For in some things this Example is vastly different from their Condition, and in many others it is above their imitation; so that if they will but seriously consider all Circumstances, they will find them so remarkable, and so extraordinary, that

that this Example can be no safe Rule for them to walk by. For,

1st, Let us consider, that in all probability this was the first Call that was given this Thief to repent; it was the first opportunity that was offer'd him to be acquainted with Christ. The Scripture says nothing at all to the contrary, and Ecclesiastical History may confirm us in this belief. Hear what account St. *Austin* gives of this penitent Thief: *Ad consequendam fidem, non fuit illi extrema hora, sed prima: Nec Religionem ante, nec Christum scivit: Non remedia status sui in momenta ultima infelici fraude posuit.* If (saith this Father) we respect his Opportunities for attaining Faith, his Repentance was not late, but early; he took the very first season: As soon as ever he descried Christ and Religion, he readily embraced them: He did not wretchedly cheat himself of the Remedies of his miserable condition, he did not adjourn the use of them to a late uncertain Futurity, which seldom or never succeeds well. Let now the bold Presumptuous sinners of our Times, compare themselves, if they please, with the Example of the Text: Let them

them see, if they can extract any Comfort or Encouragement from hence. Will they say indeed, that they never had any Call to Repentance? Will they pretend, that there was never offer'd them any Opportunity to be acquainted with Christ? Alas! how oft has Christ been Crucified before their Eyes, in the Ministry of the Word? How oft have they seen him in the Sacrament bleeding for their sins? Have they not had *Line upon Line, and Precept upon Precept*? Have they not had private and publick Admonitions? How many National Judgments and Calamities have call'd aloud for their Humiliation? How many publick Mercies and Deliverances have invited them to the Duty? Sure then, they cannot draw a parallel between their own Case and the Case of the Thief: They cannot at the Hour of Death expect any Comfort or Consolation from his Example.

2dly, Consider how remarkable, how wonderful, how extraordinary the Repentance of this Thief was. As Jewels contain vast Riches in a little room, so his short Life of Penitency had a whole Age of Repentance in it. Tho' his Re-

penitance had but a little time to breathe in, yet how busie, how active, how vigorous was it in all the great and important parts of hearty Mortification?

1. We may view here in the Text, his deep sense and humble acknowledgment of his former sins. *We suffer justly, saith he to the other Thief; we receive no more than the due rewards of our former Deeds. Magnum enim penitentiae signum in poena sua acquiescere. It is a great sign of true Repentance, saith Grotius, patiently to bear the Punishment which is inflicted, or for the Malefactor to approve of his own Condemnation. Confession is called by the Father, the Vomit of the Soul, it shews Sin to be bitter to us when we cast it up by such open Acknowledgments. And now I pray, what Comfort is there in this Example for such Presumptuous sinners amongst us, who put off their Repentance to the time of Sickness? How rarely do we find in them such a deep sense of their Sins, and a serious Humiliation for them? How lame are their Confessions, and for the most part but General? Ministers, when they come to Visit them*
in

in their Sickneſs, are forced to tranſgreſs the bounds of Modeſty, before they can extort a ſlender acknowledgment of their Faults. Tho' they have ſinned in an impudent manner, and never were aſhamed to diſhonour God, and affront their Saviour; yet now they are unwilling to take ſhame to themſelves, but deſire their ſins may be buried with them in the ſame Grave. Thus the Clinicks of the Age, do generally fall ſhort of the Example in the Text, as to this part of Repentance. But,

2dly, Let us Conſider, that this honeſt Penitent Thief was not only ſenſible of his ſin, and willing to make an open Confession of it; but he ſhewed great Charity to his fellow Thief, and labour'd to bring him to an hearty Humiliation for his Tranſgreſſions. See how his Compaſſion to his Soul diſplays it ſelf, in his paſſionate Expoſtulation with him? *What, ſaith he, doſt thou not fear God? Is this a time for thee to revile this Innocent Perſon, who has done nothing amiſs? It would better become thee to reflect upon thy former Life, to call thy paſt Sins to remembrance, and ſpend that little Breath which is left thee, in ſuing*
K 2 *for*

for a Pardon at the Throne of Grace. Sure thine Heart must be harder than an Adamant, if Death, that King of Terrors has no Darts that can pierce it. What, saith he, dost thou not at such a time as this fear God? Thus great, thus remarkable was his Charity to the Soul of his Fellow-Thief. But alas! how cold is that Charity which the Clinicks of the Age express for the Souls of others? Tho' they have been all their life time Factors for Hell, and saved the Devil the labour of Tempting men to sin: Tho' they have delighted formerly in putting the Bottle to their Neighbours mouth, and even gloried when they have been able to drink them into Brutes: Tho' they have enticed them to all sorts of Lusts, and made them bear a share in all their Debaucheries; yet in their sickness, how seldom do they send for their boon Companions? How seldom do they endeavour to rid their Souls of the guilt of other Mens sins? If their Brethren in Iniquity come at any time unsent for, and have so much Civility as to Visit them in their sickness, how frothy, at least how unseasonable is their Discourse? When do we hear them

them reminding them of their former Debaucheries, telling them the danger of them, and by ghostly Admonitions labouring to draw them out of the snare of the Devil? And since they are so unlike this penitent Thief, in their Charity for the Souls of others, they have little reason to encourage themselves by his Example. But,

3dly, Consider farther, what a strong prodigious Faith did live and act in this penitent Thief when he was a dying? We find in the Text, he believed Christ to have been a *Just Person*, even when he was numbred among Transgressors: He pronounces that our Saviour had *done nothing amiss*, notwithstanding the great *Sanhedrim* had pronounc'd him *worthy of Death*, yea, the Death of the Cross, and fit to be hanged between *two Thieves*. This was a strange prodigious Faith indeed! And yet did it exert more prodigious Acts than these, for he farther believed, that Christ had a *Kingdom*, and that a Kingdom of another World; and therefore he saith to our Saviour, at the point of Death, *Lord remember me when thou comest into thy Kingdom,*

Kingdom. What a strong prodigious Faith was here ! The wisest of the *Jews* dreamt of nothing so much as a *Temporal Kingdom* ; yea, his own Disciples were deficient in this great Article of their Faith : They are for sitting at his Right hand , and at his Left hand , in some worldly Empire. Nay, after Christ had given several Checks to their misguided Ambition , we find them still harping on this string, and at the very time of his Ascension, putting this foolish Question to him, *Lord, Wilt thou at this time restore again the Kingdom unto Israel, Act. 1. 6.* But this penitent Thief desires no Earthly Glories ; he begs not to sit at his Right hand or at his Left ; but, *Lord, saith he, remember me after Death, when thou comest into thy Kingdom.* These are strange and wonderful Acts of his Faith , and yet not all that are here recorded in the Text ; for it seems he believed Christ to have been both able and willing to save him , which is in effect, to own him for a *Mediatour* : Hence we find him making solemn and earnest Addresses to him for Mercy ; *Lord, saith he, remember me when thou comest into thy Kingdom.* One would think these

these Circumstances which I have mention'd, namely, his deep sense of his Sins, his humble Confession of them, his Charity to the Soul of his Fellow Thief, and his strange and prodigious Faith; I say, one would think these Circumstances so wonderful, and so extraordinary, that they were sufficient of themselves to evidence the sincerity of his Repentance, how short soever it was; and yet by way of Overplus, we have the Testimony of our Saviour himself concerning it, *This day, saith our Saviour, thou shalt be with me in Paradise.* Sure that Repentance must be sincere and perfect which enters into Heaven, passeth into Paradise, and makes so notorious a Thief, all on a sudden, so fit a Companion for the Holy Jesus. And now let us Enquire, what matter of Comfort here can be for the bold **Daring** sinners of the Times? Have they any reason to expect such a lively, vigorous, and extraordinary Faith? Or is it possible they should be so well assured of the sincerity of their Repentance? The Age of Miracles did expire long ago, and God having abundantly confirmed the Truths of the Gospel by

mighty Signs and Wonders, did resolve to leave the succeeding Ages of the Church to the ordinary Means of Grace. How then can we expect at the Hour of Death, to find such a wonderful Faith wrought in those profligate Wretches, who have all their Life time despised Gods Ministers, quenched all the Motions of his Holy Spirit, trampled on the Blood of the New Covenant, and shamefully abused all the ordinary Methods and Dispensations of the Gospel? And as we cannot expect to find in the Clinicks of the Age such a prodigious and extraordinary Faith, as was in this penitent Thief; so neither is it possible they should be so well assur'd of the sincerity of their Repentance, as he was. I am willing to be as Charitable to these Penitents, as the salvation of their Souls will allow me to be: And therefore let us suppose such Presumptuous sinners to be deeply sensible of their sins, and willing to Confess them: Let us suppose them sending for their Debauch'd Companions, to remind them of Eternity, and the great danger of delaying their Repentance: Nay farther, Let us suppose them *watering their Couches*

Couches with their Tears, and making most solemn Protestations of better Obedience, if God should restore them to their former Health. Supposing all this be done by the Clinicks of the Age, Is it possible for a Minister to afford them a Cordial, or any solid Comfort from this Example of the Text? For my part, I must declare, that I think it impossible. We may hope well, in the Judgment of Charity; but to give them any such Assurance, as this penitent Thief, is beyond the power and skill of the wisest Minister; for the *Heart is deceitful above all things*; and since Ministers are not Omniscious, as our Saviour was, they cannot pass an infallible Judgment upon the sincerity of such a late Repentance. When *Esau* had lost his Birth right for a *Mess of Pottage*, did not he shed as hearty and unfeigned Tears, as these supposed Penitents can do, and yet it is said, *found no place for Repentance*? Did not *Judas* run to the *Scribes and Pharisees*? Did he not confess publickly, that *he had betrayed Innocent Blood*? Nay, did he not throw down the *Thirty pieces of Silver*? And sure, if he had not been in earnest, such

such a Covetous Wretch would never have parted with his Money; and yet we know his Repentance was not right. Alas! the Horrors of Conscience, and the ghastly Apparitions of Death, will force men to do many things which God will not accept of, because they proceed from fear of Punishment, and not from the Love of him. Nay, let me add yet farther, that sad Experience has set its Seal to this Observation, That many such Penitents, who have made the most solemn Protestations of better Obedience in the time of their Sickness, when God has restored them in Mercy to their former Health, they have with the Dog returned to their Vomits, and with the Sow to their wallowings in the Mire. Thus ye see, that Repentance of the Thief in the Text was so remarkable, so wonderful, so extraordinary in all the parts of it, as will afford little solid Comfort to *Repenting Sinners* at the Hour of Death.

4ly, This Repentance of the Thief will be found yet farther extraordinary, and such as can afford little Comfort to the Clinicks of the Age, if we consider those great and extraordinary Tempta-

Temptations he had to grapple with. Christ was now in his worst Estate, in the very lowest degree of his Humiliation; there was no Beauty, no Form, no Comeliness in him, that he should be desired: The *Chief Priests*, the *Scribes* and the *Elders* mocked him; all that passed by reviled him, wagging their Heads: Of his own Disciples, some Denied him, and all of them shamefully and most ungratefully forsook him: This poor penitent Thief was the only Confessor he had. And what Inducements had he at this time to own him? He could expect no Wordly Advantages; all that he could promise himself was only this, That as he was now Crucified as a Malefactor only; so for such his Confession, his Torments would have been enhanced, and he persecuted as a Martyr: And can now the Clinicks of the Age shew us any such extraordinary Repentance? Is Christ now under the same Circumstances of Pain and Ignominy that he was then? Do not all our Creeds tell us, that he is now at the *Right hand of God*? That *He is made the Head of all things both in Heaven and in Earth*: And will it be any

any such heroick Act of Faith now to seek unto such a Glorious and Triumphant Saviour? Sure there is a vast difference between the case of the Thief, and the case of the presumptuous Sinners. The Thief had no inducements to fly to Christ for succour; and these have none to fly to but their Saviour. There is therefore but little solid comfort for such Penitents in the Example of the Text.

5ly. The case of the Thief will yet further be found extraordinary, if we consider the time when he obtained Mercy; it was no ordinary time, but a time when God was shewing a publick Act of Grace and Mercy to the World. God at this time was giving his own Son, out of great love to mankind: And therefore it might seem proper and well becoming so solemn a time, that there should be some Monument of this Infinite Mercy. It may possibly deserve your serious observation, that God Almighty did always something extraordinary to grace the several Passages of our Saviours Mediatorship. We know at his Nativity, a Glorious Star shone in the Air, and conducted the Wise Men of the

East

East to the Sun of Righteousness. At his Resurrection all the Graves were opened; and those Patriarchs which had slept for many years, had a Goal-delivery, and graced the solemnity of our Saviours Resurrection. The Holy Martyr *Ignatius* has left it upon Record, *that those very Saints who were with our Saviour at Easter, had a share also in his Ascension upon Holy Thursday.* What wonder then if we find one Penitent Thief converted, in a miraculous manner, to grace his Crucifixion? Christ was now triumphing over Principalities and Powers; he was now making a shew of them openly on the Cross: that therefore he should bear off the Field, the prey which he had taken out of the Jaws of the Enemy, was no more than was due to the solemnity of his Triumphs. Very pretty is *St. Austin's* Remark upon this passage; *Christ, saith he, in rescuing the poor Thief upon the Cross, was but quits with the Devil; for the Devil took Man from God out of the midst of Paradise:* Christ takes this poor Man from Satan when he was no less than in the very Jaws of Hell. Satan ruin'd Man on the Forbidden Tree, and Christ saves him
on

on the Cursed Tree. How proper for this occasion was such an Experiment of this Sovereign Balsom? There is then no question to be made, but this Conversion of the Thief was an extraordinary Act of Grace; *Novæ & insolitæ quædam Divinæ Virtutis Efficacia*; it was, saith Grotius, an unusual Ray of Divinity, which darting, at this time, into the Thiefs heart, wrought such strange and wonderful Repentance in him. And indeed the Conclusion will run thus high, if we lay all the promised circumstances together, that the Grace of God should work in this Thief such a deep sense of his sin; such an open confession of it, such wonderful Charity for his Neighbour, such a miraculous Faith, yea such a compleat change, all on a sudden, and that without means; yea, as you have heard, against means, and amidst the greatest Temptations to the contrary: All these shew the Conversion of this Thief to have been perfectly extraordinary, and such as was designed to Grace the Crucifixion of our Saviour. And now, I pray, what comfort can this example afford to the Clinicks of the Age? Do they think that God Almighty is obliged

obliged to work Miracles for their Conversion? And yet it is a known Rule in Divinity, that extraordinary Cases must not be made a Rule. Because God did once translate *Enoch* into Heaven, must any of us expect the same Honour and Dignity? Because some Saints arose with Christ, and ascended with him into Heaven, is this any ground for our Faith, that we shall rise before the General Resurrection? So, because God did once, in a wonderful manner, Convert a poor Thief at the hour of Death; we must not presume upon such extraordinary Mercy. It will better become us to be terrified at the example of the other Thief. We read he was left unconverted, and his Soul dropt into Hell sooner than his Carcase was taken from the Cross. If thou dost reject the ordinary means of Grace, which God does plentifully afford thee, thou canst not promise thy self extraordinary mercy at the hour of Death: in all probability it will fare with thee, as it did with the Unconverted Thief.

S E R M O N VII.

Luke xxiii. 39,—43.

*And one of the Malefactors,
which were hanged, railed
on him, saying, If thou be
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But the other answering re-
buked him, saying, Dost
thou not fear God, seeing
thou art in the same con-
demnation? And we indeed
justly, for we receive the due
re-*

reward of our deeds, but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy Kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, to day thou shalt be with me in Paradise.

I Told you the last Lords Day, that I did not design to examin all the parts of so large a Text, but only take occasion from them to shew you two things.

First, That there is no encouragement at all for a late Death-bed Repentance, in the Example of the Penitent Thief. And,

Secondly, Take occasion from the Example of the Impenitent Thief, to shew you, that a late Death-bed Repentance is a thing most dangerous, if not in some sort impossible.

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First, I shew'd you at large, the last Lords Day, that there is no encouragement at all in the Example of the Penitent Thief, for a late Death-bed Repentance. For this Example, in many things, is vastly different from the condition of presumptuous Sinners in our times. This, in all probability was the first Call that was ever given to this poor Thief, the first Opportunity that was ever offered him to be acquainted with Christ; whereas the Clinicks of the Age have had the means of Grace plentifully afforded them; they have had Line upon Line, and Precept upon Precept, publick and private Admonitions to Repent. I shew'd you further, how wonderful and extraordinary his Repentance was. We find here in the Text, his deep sense of his sins, his humble and publick Confession of his Faults; his great Charity and Compassion for the Soul of the other Thief: a Faith also strange and Prodigious, such as pronounc'd Christ a just and innocent Person, when the great *Sanhedrim* had condemn'd him for a Malefactor; such as own'd Christ to have a Kingdom, and that a Kingdom of another World, such as made him ad-
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dress to Christ for Mercy, own him in his lowest degree of Humiliation, when all the World revil'd him, and his own Disciples forsook him. Such a change as this, so sudden, and so perfect, could not be wrought without a Miraculous Power; and was design'd, as I shew'd you, to grace the Passion and Crucifixion of our Saviour, but not to encourage presumptuous sinners to delay their Repentance. As therefore we cannot think God obliged to work Miracles for the conversion of bold daring Sinners, so we cannot administer any solid comfort to them at the hour of Death, from this example of the Penitent Thief. All the kindness the Text will allow us to shew unto bold presumptuous sinners, is only to awaken them in the time of their health, to a serious and timely Repentance, from the Dreadful Example of the Impenitent Thief. This wicked Malefactor, as he had lived a most wicked Life, so he dies a most miserable Death; his Body was not sooner buried in *Golgotha*, than his Soul was hurried to the place of Torments. All the Charity of the Penitent Thief is lost upon him; all his Admonitions prove

ineffectual ; he dies Reviling and Blapheming his Saviour, and consequently could not be long from receiving the just, but dreadful rewards of such final impenitency.

I come therefore in the next place to shew you from this Example,

Secondly, That a late Repentance is a thing most dangerous, if not in some sort impossible. The generality of Mankind are ready enough to acknowledge the absolute Necessity of Repentance: They know it is as possible for a Camel, with his great Bunch upon his Back, to pass through the Eye of a Needle, as for an impenitent Sinner, made gross with the sins of many years, to enter in at the strait Gate of Heaven ; but yet with *Felix*, they put off their Repentance to a more Convenient Season: They think they shall have time enough to repent, when sickness calls upon them to pay their last debt to Nature. Indeed few men love their sins so well, as that they are willing to be damned for them: And therefore, however they live, they earnestly desire they may die like Christians ; with *Balaam* they wish *their death may be like the death of the Righteous*;

teous; and resolve not to go out of this World in an impenitent State. But yet at present they think they are not at leisure to prepare for such a death as this. Alas, they are now young and healthful; their Pulse beats evenly, and their Blood moves briskly; they have not the least symptom of any Distemper, to make them fear the approaches of Death; and therefore, as yet, they fancy they may safely delay their Repentance; they fancy it will be time enough to begin to live well, when they shall be allowed to live no longer. The great Enemy of Mankind hath not, in all his Magazine, a more deadly Engine for the destruction of Souls. So great, so fatal are the dangers which attend such practises, that Trembling is fitter than Words to express them; however the madness and folly of them will in some measure appear in these following considerations.

1st. The madness and folly of putting off Repentance to the time of Sickness, or the hour of Death, will appear if we seriously consider the uncertainty of death. *We cannot, saith Solomon, boast our selves of to morrow*; we cannot

command the next fleeting minute. Death lurks in every Corner, and waits for us in every Place. There is not a Crumb of Bread we eat, nor a Drop of Liquor that we drink; but if it goes a little a-wry, Physicians tell us may be our ruin. Histories afford us a thousand instances of sudden death. *Manlius Torquatus* died whilst he was at Supper; *Cn. Bibius*, asking the hour of the day, met with his last hour; two of the Roman Emperors slept into their Graves, even whilst they were putting on their Shoes; *C. Servilius* died whilst he was standing in the Market; *M. Terentius* whilst he was a Writing; and to name but one more, and that out of our own Chronicles, *Mr. H. Morris* died at a game of Tennis. Thus uncertain is the time of Death, and therefore their madness is both great and certain, who procrastinate their Repentance till the hour of Death. We know not how soon this may come, we know not how suddenly it may surprize us. Were not *Zimri* and *Cosbi* smitten in the very Act of their Uncleanness? Were not *Ammon* and *Belshazzar* taken in the midst of their drunken Cups? *Corah* and his Factious Crew

Crew were swept away in their Rebellion : And to name no more, the Covetous Fool in the Gospel received his Summons to another World, even when he was singing a *requiem* to his Soul in this; saying, *Soul take thine Ease, thou hast Goods laid up for many Tears.* What folly then will it be, to put off Repentance till the time of Sicknes, or the hour of Death? But since Men are of this Humour, let us, for once, take them at their words; and try if they will repent one day, at least, before they dye? This they profess they are willing to do, because they know their Salvation depends upon it. But if in truth they are in earnest; if they are unfeignedly resolved to Repent one day before they dye, they must begin the Work this very day; for what know they but this may be their last day? Sure they have not made a Covenant with Death, or an Agreement with Hell: Sure it is not in their Power to dispose of Times and Seasons: Their Breath is in the Hands of God, and not in their own. Hear what *Solomon* saith, Ecclef. 9. 12. *Man knoweth not his time; as the Fishes that are caught in an evil Net,*

and as the Birds are caught in the Snare ; so are the Sons of Men snared in an evil time, when it cometh suddenly upon them. If therefore men have any real kindness for their Souls, they will not run the hazard of an uncertain futurity ; they will rather think it reasonable to follow our Saviours advice, Mat. 25. 13. *Watch, for ye do not know the day, nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh.*

2ly, A late Repentance will further be found a thing full of danger, if not in some sort impossible, if we consider that the time of Sicknes, or the hour of Death is a very improper, and unseasonable time for Repentance. If Men be not surprized by a sudden Death, or snatcht away in Wrath before the Rots perceive the Thorns, as the Psalmist praises it, yet how often are they seiz'd on by such kind of Diseases, as render their Repentance a thing impossible? Seneca speaks of a *Morbus insanabilis qui animo afficiat, & mentem concutiat*, such a violent Distemper, as either deprives Men wholly of their Reason, or else disturbs the use of their Understandings : And tho' he speaks but of one in the

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the singular number, yet Physicians tell of many in their Books, such as the *Coma*, the *Lethargy*, the *Carus*, the *Apoplexy*, the *Catoche*, *Catalepsis*, *Erisipylas*, *Phrenzy*, *Mania*, and several others. Now has any presumptuous sinner a protection from Heaven against these drowsie stupefying Distempers, such as will deprive him of his Reason, and consequently incapacitate him for any works of Piety and Religion? But suppose the sinner should escape such Diseases as these, do not other Diseases render the time of Death a most improper season for the work of Repentance? Let but such a presumptuous sinner sometimes bestow a visit on his sick Friends and Neighbours, and then let him judge whether the time of sickness be a fit time to perform such a difficult and important work as Repentance is. May he not now see how troubled and disturbed their thoughts are? How uneasie and disturbed their Minds? How strangely doth their Reason and Understanding decay? How fast their Memories and Senses fail them, whilst their Bodies groan under great anguish and extremity of Pain? And is this, think ye, a proper time to prepare
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for Eternity? Is so much Weakness able to wrestle with Principalities and Powers? Is he, who cannot help himself, fit to encounter sin at its greatest strength, and work in himself all the pious habits of the contrary Virtues? We do not ordinarily account them wise Men, who leave their worldly Affairs to be settled at this time. What stupendious folly then will it be to leave all our Spiritual Concerns, Matters of everlasting Moment and Importance, to be transacted at our dying hour? The best of Men are so far indisposed in the time of sickness, that they are unfit to engage themselves in any Religious Exercises. Good *Hezekiah*; as pious and excellent a Prince as he was, was able in his sickness to do no more than charter as a Crane. Tho' none at other times knew better how to pray, yet now it seems he can but charter, and is obliged, by reason of his Infirmary, to beg the prayers of the Prophet *Esay*: And as it was with *Hezekiah*, so it happens unto other Holy Men; which occasioned that Advice of St. James, Chap. 5. 14. *Is any sick among you, let him call for the Elders of the Church, and let them*

them pray over him. And if good Men, if such as *Hezekiah* be rendred by sickness unfit for prayer, and the other exercises of Religion; how must sickness indispose the wicked, who never were acquainted with these Religious Exercises before? They of all men are most unfit to set about such Duties as these: For besides those exquisite Pains they labour under; besides all those indispositions both of Body and Mind, which they have common with other men; the sad remembrances of their former sins, and the more dreadful apprehensions of an incensed Deity, will now inhaunce their troubles; they will fill their Souls with unspeakable horrors, and even deter them from endeavouring to make their peace with Heaven. And besides all this, Satan, we may be sure, will be busie at this time to draw these sinners to despair: Tho' he used to tell them in the time of their health, that it was too soon to Repent, yet this malicious Fiend will now suggest that it is too late; he will tell them the Door of Mercy is now shut upon them, and that God, whom they refused to hear all their life long, will now be as backward to hear

hear them. All these considerations laid together, will, I believe, make a late Repentance a thing most dangerous, if not in some sort impossible.

3^{ly}, A late Death-bed Repentance will appear a thing most dangerous, if not in some sort impossible, if we consider what is required to the compleating and perfecting of Repentance. Now Repentance doth denote our ceasing to do evil, and our learning to do well: Our rooting out all the inveterate habits of Vice, and planting in our Souls the contrary habits of Virtue: And this sure must be a work of great difficulty, and consequently of time. For sin, as it grows up by degrees, and gains strength by custom and continuance, so it must be conquered by degrees, abate by a long series and succession of contrary acts. Every step we made forward must be repeated backward; the Web we formerly spun, must now all be unravelled: And believe it, we will find it a work of time and difficulty too, to correct our impetuous inclinations, to render our sensual Appetites obsequious to Reason, our Passions regular and steady, and cleanse our Souls from
vanity,

vanity, sloth, perverseness and all vitious distempers. It takes good men many months and years to conquer one impetuous Lust, and subdue one unreasonable Passion; and do these Presumptuous Sinners expect to conquer all their Lusts in a trice, to blow them away with a little breath, a Lord have mercy upon us, and the like? And as Vice is not easily conquered, so neither is Virtue so easily obtained: It is not like *Jonah's* Gourd, which grows up in a night; no, it is a tender and delicate Plant, it grows but slowly, it needs much pains to cultivate it, much care to guard it, much time to mature it, especially in the untoward Soil of corrupt Nature, and the unkindly weather of this wicked World. And if it be so hard a matter to obtain one single Virtue, what pains, what time is required to get the whole circle of them; *to add* as *St. Peter* speaks, *to our Faith, Virtue; to Virtue, Knowledge; to Knowledge, Temperance*, and so on? Is this, think ye, the work of a dying hour, the business only of a day, or the short time of sickness? The whole time of our life seems too little for it, and would in truth be so,
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if God were not so Merciful, as to crown our imperfect Endeavours with his gracious assistance, and render them in some sort perfect by his favourable Acceptance. One thing more I shall add unto this Head, which you may learn from *Rom. 2. 7.* where St. Paul tells us, that we must *by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality.* It seems, we cannot expect Eternal life, unless we conquer Sin, and gain the contrary habits of Virtue, yea, which is more yet, we must *patiently continue in well doing.* All this will certainly make a Death bed Repentance a thing most dangerous, if not in some sort impossible, as the Prophet *Jeremy* represents it, *Chap. 13. 23. Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the Leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, who are accustomed to do evil.*

4ly, A late Repentance will yet farther appear to be a thing most dangerous, if not in some sort impossible, if we consider how little it is such a Presumptuous sinner is able to do in the Time of Sickness. I grant, such a person may express some Grief and Sorrow for sin; but since this Sorrow proceeds

proceeds more from fear of Punishment, than any real love of God and Virtue, it cannot be that Godly Sorrow, which worketh Repentance to salvation, never to be repented of. I grant yet farther, that such a sinner may with great earnestness beg pardon of his sins, restore perhaps his Ill-gotten Goods, and which is the most he can do, make solemn Resolutions of Amendment and better Obedience, if God should restore him to his former Health. This is all such a sinner can possibly do at the Hour of Death; but will all this amount to a sincere and hearty Repentance? Pray, let it be consider'd, what I told you the last Lord's Day, namely, That Experience has frequently declared these dying Resolutions to be but forc'd and feigned; and such Penitents, when by God's Mercy they have been restor'd to their former Health, notwithstanding all their Protestations, have with the Dog returned to their Vomits, and with the Sow to their wallowing in the Mire. And have we any reason then, to look on such Resolutions as these to be hearty Repentances? Besides, a Resolution to repent and amend, is not properly to
Repent

Repent and Amend. Apply this to other Cases, and you'll easily find the falsity of it. Suppose a man resolves to learn the Art of Sailing, does this Resolution presently make him a skilful Mariner? No more does a Resolution to repent and amend, make a true Penitent or honest Christian: Such a Change as this is not so easily wrought, such a Reformation is not so suddenly produc'd. The *Mathematicks*, or any other Art, may more easily be learned, than the Art of *Living-well*, because all Arts must be acquired by repeated Acts; and since Corrupt Nature is more opposite to the Art of *Living-well*, than to any other, it is impossible it should be attained by a bare unactive Resolution. Now tho' all this do abundantly shew a late Death-bed Repentance to be a thing most dangerous, and in some sort impossible; and yet seeing this is a Subject of most serious importance,

5^{ly}, I will in the Fifth place add one Consideration more, which will shew it yet to be more dangerous, and in some sort impossible: And pray let it be Consider'd, that the Day of Grace may be lost,

lost, before the Day of Death come. Sure, it is not possible that such sinners should repent, without the assistance of God's Grace; and yet before their death they may sin to such an height, as to forfeit this assistance of God's Grace. It is the vain Fancy of such Presumptuous sinners, that the *Day of Grace* and the *Day of Life* run parallel, and that as long as the one lasts, the other will last too; and therefore they encourage themselves in their wickedness, thinking they shall have time enough to repent when they come to dye. But if this Fancy of theirs be vain, the delaying of Repentance till the Hour of Death, must needs be a thing most dangerous, and in some sort impossible. Now it is very plain from Scripture, that God has set bounds to his Patience, and limits to his Mercy: Tho' he bears very much with sinners, and waits a long time to be gracious; yet he has told us expressly, *Gen. 6. 3. My Spirit shall not always strive with men*: We find in the following Verse, that God allowed the *Anti-Diluvians*, or Old World, a long Day of Grace; he promised to bear with them 120 Years; now during this

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time

time he sent unto them *Noah*, a Preacher of *Righteousness*: Besides those Admonitions and frequent Calls the Holy Man gave them to repent, his very building the Ark, was a constant daily Sermon to them; but when they would not hearken to this Preacher, but scoffed at his Discourses, God did not tarry for the time of their death, but with a dreadful Deluge swept them all away. In *Luc. 19. 41, 42.* we find our Saviour weeping over *Jerusalem*, and declaring their wretched Condition in such like doleful Accents as these: *O that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy Day, the things which belong unto thy Peace: but now are they hid from thine Eyes.* It seems the Day of Grace has an Evening, before the Night of Death approaches: The things of Peace were hid from the Eyes of *Jerusalem*, before they were closed by the Hand of Death. To this we may add what we read in *Prov. 1. 28.* *Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but shall not find me.* There is a certain Measure of Iniquity, God is said in Scripture to allow Sinners to fill up; and when this Measure is full, they may call

call upon him in vain, they may seek him early and late, but he will not hear them. And as it is thus plain from these Texts, that the Day of Grace may be lost before the Day of Death; so the same Truth may be evidenced by fundry Scripture Examples. God allowed *Cain* a Day of Grace, and during the Time of this Day, *Cain*, tho' he sinned again and again, yet he heard nothing but this *Still Voice*, *If thou dost well, shalt not thou be accepted? but if thou dost ill, Sin lieth at the door.* But when all the Means of Grace were lost upon him; when notwithstanding the frequent Admonitions of his Father and solemn Remembrances of Heaven, he added sin to sin, till at last he fill'd up the Measure of his Iniquity, by murdering Righteous *Abel*; His season of Grace was then gone, and God tells him in plain terms, that he was then *accursed from the Earth*. Now this hapned unto him some hundreds of years before his death. Another Instance we have in *Esau*, whom the Apostle styles a *Profane person*: He was an idle, unprofitable Fellow, one who spent too much of his time in Gaming and impertinent Recrea-

tions ; and to all his other sins he added the selling of his *Birthright*, on which were entailed all the *Blessings of Heaven* ; and this indeed shewed him to be a *Profane person* with a witness ; one that preferr'd his Sports and Recreations, before God and his Religion. Now this great sin fill'd up the Measure of his Iniquity, so that his Day of Grace expir'd some 50 years before his death, as Divines compute : And tho' now he endeavour'd to regain his Birth right ; tho' he sought the Blessing earnestly and with Tears, yet he was rejected, there was *no place found for Repentance*, *Heb. 12. 17.* I shall add but one Instance more, and it shall be the Example of wicked *Saul*. God had striven with *Saul* many ways, and many times : He had given him Riches and Honours, yea, all the Glories of a Kingdom, and which were more than all, the gifts of his Spirit ; but when *Saul* multiplied his Transgressions, and notwithstanding such signal Tokens of his Favour rebelled against the Lord, God then cast him off ; yea, he sent an *Evil Spirit* to torment him, and would no longer hearken to his Cries, as he sadly con-

confesses to the Witch of *Endor*. Now this Rejection hapned 36 years before he died, according to *Josephus's* Chronology. Thus God does withdraw the Assistances of his Spirit from sinners long before they dye: In their Life time he delivers them up to a Spirit of slumber and of giddiness: He hardens their Hearts, and sears their Consciences, and gives them over to a Reprobate sense. And since these things are so, it will be too late for the Clinicks of the Age to repent when they come to dye. If they will obstinately go on in a Course of wickedness, and multiply their Transgressions till the measure of their Iniquity be full, then they are beyond the possibility of Salvation; they have then forfeited the Assistance of God's Grace, without which it is impossible they should repent. It will therefore be safe for sinners to follow *St. Paul's* Advice, *To day if ye will hear his Voice, harden not your hearts*: As the Prophet Exhorts, *Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon while he is near*. Let not this present Discourse, this present Opportunity be lost upon you; for, as the Apostle speaks, *Now*

is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation: Begin this very moment to resolve against thy sins; come this day to the Holy Sacrament, and there vow and swear, that thou wilt hereafter keep all Gods Righteous Judgments. I shall conclude all with the excellent Advice of the Son of Sirach: Say not, Gods Mercy is great, and he will be pacified for the multitude of thy sins: For Mercy and Wrath is with him; he is mighty to forgive, and to pour out Displeasure; and as his Mercy is great, so are his Corrections also. Therefore make no long tarrying to turn to the Lord, and put not off from day to day: For suddenly shall the Wrath of the Lord come forth, and in thy security thou shalt be destroyed. Humble thy self before thou be sick, and in the time of Sins shew Repentance: Let nothing hinder to pay thy Vows in due time, and defer not till Death to be justified.

*The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
&c.*

SERMON

S E R M O N V I I I .

Luke xxiii. 43.

*To day shalt thou be with me
in Paradise.*

TH E Occasion of which Words we may easily learn from the Context : We find *Ver. 33.* that our Blessed Saviour was Crucified betwixt two Thieves , or Malefactors : Tho' he was *without sin* , yet, as the Apostle speaks, he appeared in the *likeness of sinful Flesh* ; and , as the Prophet *Esay* tells us, was *numbred with*

the Transgressors, Chap. 53. 12. Now one of these Malefactors begins to rail on our Saviour, saying, *If thou be the Christ, save thy self and us*, ver. 39. It is an Argument of desperate Wickedness, to insult over such as are in Misery; it is no less than to defie Almighty God, who is the Protector of such as are in misery, and uses to avenge their quarrel: And therefore the other Malefactor rebukes him, *ver. 40. saying, Dost not thou fear God, especially since thou art in the same Condemnation?* Such as are in Prosperity do ordinarily forget God, but in time of Adversity most men will consider: When they are approaching towards the *Gates of Death*, they are then generally serious, the Thoughts of another World, and the prospect of a Future state, usually strikes an awe into their Souls: But this Thief is so desperately wicked, that even on the Cross, and when Death was near at hand, he despises God, and reviles our Saviour. But the other Thief gives ample demonstrations of his sincere Repentance and Faith in the Messiah: For he does not only rebuke his Fellow Thief, and endeavours his Conversion; but he also
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acknowledges his Fault, and patiently submits to the Punishment, as a *just reward of his Evil deeds*, ver. 41. If such scandalous persons that are amongst us, would, when they are upon their Death-beds, thus take shame to themselves by a free Confession of their Faults: If they would send for such persons, whom in the time of their Health they have endeavour'd to debauch, either by their Example or Counsel, and acquaint them with the danger of *Sin*, and the bitterness they then find in it; they would give the World much better demonstrations of their sincere Repentance, and much surer grounds to hope their Eternal welfare. And as this poor Thief gives such ample demonstrations of his sincere Repentance; so he gives also very good proof of a true and stedfast Faith in Christ; for ver. 42. he says unto Christ Jesus, *Lord, remember me, when thou comest into thy Kingdom*. Ye see he believes Christ to be the Lord, and to have a Kingdom, tho' not in this World, which was more than Christ's own Disciples did: Nay farther, he owns Christ upon the Cross, and when in the lowest degree of his state of Humiliation,

tion, even when all the *Jews* were mocking and persecuting him; yea, when his own Disciples forsook him, and *St. Peter*, one of the Chiefest, had deny'd him thrice: Nay farther yet, how wonderful was his Humility? he only desires, that Christ would remember him in his Kingdom. He does not presume to ask, that he might sit on Christ's Right hand, or on his Left, in his Kingdom; but only, that he would *remember him*. A true penitent, humble Soul will think the least degree of Mercy great enough, or too great for him. I have the rather noted all this, because too many encourage themselves in their Wickedness by the Example of this poor Thief: They think they may live as they list, and yet be saved if they repent on a Sick-bed, and at the Hour of Death: But how rare is it, that God does give such Presumptuous sinners so much Grace in the time of their sickness? How seldom do they give such ample demonstrations of their Faith, Humility, and sincere Repentance? Now, what Answer does Christ return to this honest Thief? The Text will give you a fair account of this: *Then said Jesus*

Jesus unto him, Verily I say unto thee, to day shalt thou be with me in Paradise. In which Words we have a fair description of the happiness of pious Souls, after they are departed from this wretched Body. I shall consider the Words in the same order that they lye : And,

First, They assure us, That pious Souls are immediately admitted to the actual possession of Happiness, upon their departure from the Body: To Day, saith Christ.

Secondly, They do farther assure us of the greatness of this Happiness; they shall be with Christ, and they shall be in Paradise: To day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.

First, These Words assure us, that pious Souls are immediately admitted to the actual possession of Happiness, upon their departure from the Body. There are a sort of Men in the World they call Psychoparnuichites, who hold, that the Soul, after its departure from the Body, sleeps all the while till the General Resurrection, and consequently is neither in a State of Joy nor Misery till the Day of Judgment; when it shall be reunited

united to the Body, and sent with it either to Heaven or Hell. But it is plain from the Text, that the Souls of Good men are immediately, after their departure from the Body, admitted to the actual possession of Eternal happiness: For Christ does here promise this honest Thief, that he should be that very day with him in Paradise. Paradise is a place of Joy and Bliss, and to be with Christ, is to be in a state of Happiness. Now in such a place, and in such a state was the Thief to be that very day. So Act. 7. 56. St. Stephen saw the Heavens open'd, and the Son of Man standing on the Right hand of God: He knew the Heavens were open'd for him, and that Christ stood there ready to receive him into Glory; and therefore he prays, ver. 59. Lord Jesus receive my Spirit. So again, 2 Cor. 5. 8. We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the Body, and to be present with the Lord. It seems the pious Soul, as soon as it is absent from the Body, it is present with the Lord, and consequently in a state of Bliss and Glory. Again, Revel. 14. 13. I heard a Voice from Heaven, saying, Write, blessed are the dead which dye in the

the Lod from henceforth, yea, saith the Spirit, that they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them. Ye see here the Godly are said to be blessed as soon as they dye; and not only to rest, but also to receive the reward of their good Works. I shall add but one Text more, which you'l find *Phil. i. 21, 22.* *I am in a strait betwixt two, saith St. Paul, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.* As much as if the Apostle should have said, I cannot tell whether I should desire, to live longer, or to dye sooner, being prest with Arguments on both sides: If I consult my self and my own good, it is doubtless better for me to dye, and enter presently into Happiness: But then, if I consult your Convenience, it were better I should live longer in the World, to be serviceable unto your Edification. Now I think it is evident, that if the Apostle could have supposed, that his Soul should have slept after death, and not presently have enter'd into the fruition of Bliss, there could have been no strait in the case, nor any dispute, but that it was better to live

live still in the World, to continue in the Comforts of a good Conscience, and of doing good to others, rather than to be in a constant sleep, or in a senseless state of stupidity and inactivity. From all which Places of Scripture it is, most plain, that the Souls of good Men do not sleep, after their separation from the Body, (as some among us fancy) but are immediately received into Bliss, as *Lazarus* was into *Abrahams* Bosom, and the Thief here in the Text into Paradise.

Use. And we learn from hence the Reason, why the Primitive Christians did celebrate their Funerals with Joy and Feasting: We use to rejoyce at the Happiness of our Friends in this World; and they much more, at their happiness in a better. They did not therefore, as we do now, hang their Houses and Churches with Mourning; but as *Prudentius* tells us, with *White*, the Emblem of Joy: For they looked upon the day of their Deaths, as their Birth-day to an Eternal life; and their going out of this World, as an entrance upon the incomprehensible Happiness of a better. And indeed we shall find, they had Cause enough

enough to rejoyce, if we consider the greatness of the Happiness they were possess'd of; and this I told you was exprest in the Text by these two things:

1st, They shall be with Christ.

2^{dly}, They shall be in Paradise.

1st, The Godly, after death, are said to be with Christ. Now, how great is the Happiness which lies couched in these Words? We cannot be with Christ, but we must be with all the Saints and Angels of Heaven: Nay farther, we must enjoy the sweet and ravishing Communion of all the Persons of the Ever Blessed Trinity: And sure such Company cannot but enhance the happiness of Heaven. Society is ordinarily styled *Sal vitæ*, the *Salt of Life*; without this the Life of Man would be most unflavoury and unpleasant. We know God said at the Creation of the World, *It is not good for Man to be alone*. It seems Paradise it self would have been a Valley of *Bacha*, little less than a Comfortless Solitude, without the refreshments of Society. That therefore nothing may be wanting to compleat the happiness of the Paradise above, *St. Paul*,
Heb.

Heb. 12. 22. gives us a large Catalogue of that Glorious Company we shall converse with in Heaven; *We shall come,* saith he, *to the General Assembly of the First-born, to the Spirits of Just Men made Perfect, to an innumerable Company of Angels, and to God the Judge of all, and to Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant.* From which place it is most plain, that we cannot be with Christ, but we must also be with God, with Angels, and with the Spirits of Just Men made Perfect. Now such Glorious Company cannot but make the Happiness of Paradise exceeding great, as will appear more at large by considering in particular what it is to be,

First, With all the Saints of Heaven.

Secondly, What it is to be with the Angels. And,

Thirdly, What it is to be with God and Christ.

1st. Let us enquire what it is to be with all the Saints of Heaven, and how the happiness of Paradise is enhanced by such Glorious Company. It is the unhappiness of the Godly here below, that with *Daniel*, they are forced sometimes

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to dwell in the same Den with Lions, or else converse, as *St. Paul* did at *Ephesus*, with Men that did more truly deserve the name of Beasts. How was righteous *Lot* vexed daily with the filthy Conversation of the *Sodomites*? How does *David* mourn, that he was forced to dwell in *Mesech*, and sojourn in the Tents of *Kedar*? The good Man whilst he lives in this World, has his Eyes daily bloodshot with Murders; his Ears unhallowed with Oaths and Blaphemies; his Nostrils offended with the Drunkards Vomits; and his Memory made too often the Cabinet of vain frothy or obscene Discourses; so that with good *Lucullus* in *Tully*, he frequently desires his Memory were worse, or that he could learn the Art of Oblivion. But in Heaven the Godly shall be freed from all such vile and troublesom Company: Here there will be no Murderers, no Whoremongers, no Drunkards, no Dogs to molest them, *Rev. 22. 15.* In the Heavenly Canaan there will be no Canaanites to be pricks in their Eyes, and Thorns in their Sides: But they shall converse for ever with all the Saints of Heaven, and live in the general Assem-

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bly of the First-born. Now what it is thus to live with all the Saints of Heaven, I shall shew you more distinctly in these following Particulars.

1st. The Godly shall know all the Blessed Saints that are in Heaven. It is a wonder it should be disputed by any Divines, whether the Saints in Glory shall know one another: But sure there can be little comfort in Society, where there is not a particular Knowledge and a familiar Acquaintance. St. Austin therefore tells us, *In Cælo a singulis omnes, ab omnibus singuli cognoscentur*, In Heaven, saith he, all Men shall be known of every Man, and every Man shall be known of all Men. It is reported of Luther, that being reasoable well the night before he died, he sate at Table with his Friends, and the matter of their Discourse hapned to be, *Whether they should know one another in Heaven? Whether the Father should know his Child, a Husband his Wife, and a Friend his Friend?* Luther resolv'd the point in the Affirmative, and gave this Reason, among others, for it; Adam, saith he, knew Eve as soon as he saw her; and be sure our Knowledge in the Heavenly Paradise shall

shall be much greater than his was in the Earthly Paradise; none will be Strangers there, but every Glorified Saint shall know all the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, and all the Servants of God. We find, Mat. 17. 4. Peter, James and John, who were allowed to see Christs Transfiguration, knew Moses and Elias, whom they had never seen before; how much more shall we, being fully Illuminated, and perfectly Glorified in Heaven, know exactly all the Blessed Ones, tho' never acquainted with them upon Earth? This therefore is one part of the Happiness of the Godly in Heaven, they shall see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the Kingdom of God, as our Saviour speaks, Luke 13. 28. They shall know all those Worthies and Heroes that have gone to Heaven before, or shall come thither after them; but this is not all, For,

2ly. We shall not only know all God's Saints in Heaven, but we shall have more sweet and ravishing Communion with them. Here a Nazianzen shall repeat the Embraces of his Beloved Basil, a David for ever enjoy his Dearest Jonathan, and the Pious Soul possess what

Socrates could of old but wish for; namely, the intimate converses of all those Brave Heroes who have gone thither before him. And you'll easily believe there shall be most sweet Communion among the Saints in Heaven, when you have considered the important Praise, by which it is exprest, *Mat. 8.*

11. *And I say unto you, that many shall come from the East and West, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven.* In our Translation it is *shall sit down*, but in the Greek it is *shall lie down upon Beds*, as they used to do at their greatest Feasts. So that there shall be much sweet and pleasant Communion among the Saints in Heaven, as uses to be among Friends at their most solemn Feasts. Hence also we read, *Luke 16.*
22. *That Lazarus was carried by the Angels into Abrahams Bosom.* It was the manner of the Jews, when they feasted, to lean in the Bosom one of another: Thus *St. John*, when he sate to eat with Christ, is said to lean in his Bosom. So here, *Lazarus* being laid in *Abrahams Bosom*, denotes they have a continual Feast of Joy in Heaven; they are constantly enter-

tertained with the Supper of the Lamb ; and consequently must needs have sweet and ravishing Society and Communion each with other. And how does this inhance the Happiness of Paradise above? Ask your own experience, what sweetness you have found in their Conversation here below ? Did not King *David* account them the most excellent Persons upon Earth, and delight exceedingly in the society of God's Saints? And if so much Delight be to be found, if so much Sweetness be to be tasted in the Society of the Saints here on Earth , How much more abundantly shall we be satisfied with their Company and Conversation in Heaven ? Alas, here the very best of men have so many Imperfections, and are subject to so many Misfortunes, as do often make their Acquaintance troublesome and unpleasant to us. Hence it was good Advice which was given by *Aristotle*, namely, *that we should not greatly multiply Friends , because their frequent falling into Miseries and Misfortunes, would imbitter our Lives, and make our Condition wretched and miserable.* But in Heaven we are told to our Comfort, that we shall converse with the

Spirits of just Men made Perfect. The Saints in Heaven will have no Infirmities, no Imperfections to abate and allay the solaces of their Conversation : But on the other hand, they will have all those Excellencies and Advantages which are requisite to make their Company Sweet and Desirable; and how great must this Happiness needs be ? When Christs Disciples, at the Transfiguration, enjoyed the Company only of *Moses* and *Elias*, they were so well satisfied with it, that they cried out *bonum est nobis esse hic*, it is good for us to be here. How much greater will their Happiness be, who shall be with Christ in Paradise ! For they cannot be with him, but they must be with all his Saints. As soon as this Penitent Thief entred the Gates of Heaven. he was joyfully received with all the Honourable Companies and Troops above. There did the Patriarchs meet him, the Prophets hug'd him, and the Martyrs struck up their Harps, and bid him welcom to the Celestial Regions ; such joy as this did enter his Soul, when he did enter into the joy of his Master. But,

2ly. To be with Christ, is not only to be with all the Saints, but also with all the Angels of Heaven. *St. Paul* tells us, *Heb. 12. 22.* *That when we come to the Heavenly Jerusalem, we shall come to an innumerable Company of Angels.* How great must the Pleasure be of being acquainted with such Glorious Creatures! How great the Happiness of hearing their Ravishing Musick! The Seraphims and Cherubims are continually Blessing and Praising God; and their Heavenly Harmony consists of ten thousand times ten thousand various Voices. So we read, *Rev. 5. 11.* *I heard (saith St. John) the Voice of many Angels round about the Throne, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, yea even thousands of thousands:* This is the true Musick of the Sphears, and it will certainly be most ravishing, since it is performed by such vast numbers of such Glorious Choristers. This is the great Happiness of the Godly in Heaven, they shall live with the General Assembly of the First-born, and with an innumerable company of Angels, crying out continually with them, *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive Honour, and Glory, and*

Power. But this is not all, for the Godly shall not only be with Christs Saints and Angels, But.

3^{ly}. They shall be with Christ himself. Now the Godly in Heaven shall be with Christ.

First, In respect of his Humanity.

Secondly, In respect of his Divinity.

First, The Godly shall be with Christ in respect of his Humanity. *This day, saith Christ, shalt thou be with me.* As soon as Christs Scul was separated from his Body, it went to Heaven, and the poor Thiefs went along with it. But the Godly that die now, they see not only the Soul, but also the Body of Christ. Hence St. Paul, describing the Happiness of the Godly in Heaven, tells us, *That they shall come to Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant.* Now Christ, as Mediator, was Man as well as God: And it will be part of our Happiness to be with him as Man. It was one of St. Austins three wishes, *that he might see Christ in the Flesh*: But in Heaven we shall not only see Christs Body, but we shall see all that Glory God has bestowed upon it there. To this

this purpose is our Saviours Prayer, John 17. 24. *Father, I will, that they also whom thou hast given me, may be with me, where I am, that they may behold my Glory, which thou hast given me.* How great will our Happiness be, when we shall behold all Christ's Glory? When we shall see him sitting at the Right Hand of Power, highly exalted above every Name; yea, even above the most Glorious Cherubims and Seraphims. And this Glory of Christ will rejoyce us the more, because our Nature is Glorified in him. As a Queen that sees the Prince in his Glory, delights the more in it, because she looks upon it as her own. So when the Church Triumphant shall see Christ her Husband in all his Glory, she will rejoyce in it, because it is her own Glory. Who can express this part of our Happiness? *Blessed are the Eyes, saith Christ, which see those things that you see here.* If it were such a blessed thing to see Christ in his State of Humiliation, How great will that Blessedness be, when we shall see him in his State of Glory and Exaltation? It will be the business of God's Saints in Heaven, eternally to follow the Lamb whither-

therſoever he goeth, and admire the Luſtre and Beauty of the Glorified Jeſus. So we are told, *2 Theſſ. 1. 10.* where it is ſaid, *that when Chriſt ſhall come in the Glory of his Power, he ſhall come to be Glorified in his Saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.*

2ly. The Godly ſhall be with Chriſt in reſpect of his Divinity. In Heaven we ſhall enjoy the glorious preſence of the Divine Majeſty. Here we ſhall ſee God, and which is more, we ſhall ſee him as he is. Here it is that we ſhall ſee the King of Heaven in his perfect Beauty, and we ſhall not only ſee him, but we ſhall alſo enjoy him, and have ſweet and raviſhing Communion with all the perſons of the ever Bleſſed Trinity: And this is that which is the very height of Blifs. To enjoy the Company of Saints and Angels is happineſs, great beyond our utmoſt imagination; and yet they are but as little drops, if compared to that Ocean of Blifs which will flow into the Soul upon the enjoyment of God himſelf. It was a noble ſaying of *Luthers*, *That he had rather be in Hell with God's preſence, than in Heaven without it:* And if the preſence
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of God be thus able to convert even Hell it self into Heaven, the enjoyment of this will certainly make Heaven become what it is styled in Scripture, *an Heaven of Heavens*. This therefore is the Flower of Joy, the Quintessence of Comfort, the Crown of Blessedness, and the very Soul of Heaven. For whilst we enjoy God, we must needs enjoy all things. All that is good did at first flow from him, and therefore is more eminently to be found in him, as in its Fountain and Original. All that can delight our Souls, or ravish our Hearts; all that is lovely and desirable, are here to be found, in their greatest perfections: Well then might the Psalmist say, Psal. 16. 11. *In thy Presence there is fulness of Joy, and at thy Right Hand, there are Pleasures for evermore.* But because so Copious, so Pleasant, and so edifying a Subject does deserve better than to be lightly toucht in the close of a Sermon, I shall reserve the fuller handling of it till the next opportunity. Thus ye see the top of our Happiness in Heaven, consists in our enjoyment of the Blessed Trinity. And since these things are so, give me leave to exhort you to
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acquaint your selves with this great Mystery of the Trinity. The more we know of the Trinity here, the more capable shall we be of enjoying Communion with the Father, Son and Holy Ghost hereafter. When therefore ye go home, meditate on the Lessons, and other Portions of Scripture which our Church this day recommends to your serious consideration : This is the way to be well acquainted with the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity, and prepare your selves for the happy enjoyment of them in Heaven ; which God grant.

SERMON

SERMON IX.

Luke xxiv. 43.

*To day shalt thou be with me
in Paradise.*

I Have formerly made some entrance upon these Words, and hope now to finish them. The Method I proposed was,

First, To shew you, that the Souls of the Godly are immediately admitted to the actual possession of Happiness, upon their departure from the Body.

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Secondly, The Happiness is exceeding great, for it is said here in the Text, *That they shall be with Christ, and they shall be in Paradise.*

First, The Souls of the Godly, after their departure from the Body, are immediately admitted to the actual possession of Happiness. There are a sort of Men in the World they call *Psycho-pannicles*, who hold, the Soul after its separation from the Body, sleeps all the while till the general Resurrection, and consequently is neither in a State of Joy or Miserie. *But how do these men err, not knowing the Scripture?* For here in the Text, our Saviour says unto the Thief, *to day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.* Paradise is a place of Joy and Bliss, and to be with Christ is to be in a State of Happiness. Now in such a place, and in such a State was this honest Thief to be that very day. I named several Texts for the clearing of this Truth, but I shall only name one of them at this time, which you will find Phil. i. 21, 22. *I am in a strait betwixt two, saith St. Paul, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better: Nevertheless, to abide in the*
Flesh

Flesh is more needful for you. As much as if the Apostle should have said, I cannot tell whether I should desire, to live longer, or die sooner, being prest with Arguments on both sides. If I consult my own good, it is doubtless better for me to die, and enter presently into Happiness; but then if I consult your convenience, it were better I should live longer in the World to be serviceable to your Edification. Now I think it is evident, that if the Apostle could have supposed, that his Soul should have slept after Death, and not presently have entred into the fruition of Bliss, there could have been no strait in the case, nor any dispute, but that it was better to live still in the World, to continue in the Comforts of a good Conscience, and of doing good to others, rather than to be in a constant Sleep, or in a senseless state of Stupidity and Inactivity. From these places of Scripture it is most plain, that the Souls of good Men do not sleep after Death, but are immediately received into Bliss, as *Lazarus* was into *Abrahams* Bosom, and this honest Thief, in the Text, into Paradise.

Secondly, This Happiness of the Godly is exceeding great, for they are said,
1st. To be with Christ. And,
2ly. To be in Paradise.

1. The Godly after Death, are said to be with Christ; and how great is the Happiness which lies couched in these words? For we cannot be with Christ, but we must be with all the Saints, and with all the Angels of Heaven; nay further, we must enjoy the sweet and ravishing Communion of all the Persons of the ever Blessed Trinity. So much may be gathered from Heb. 12. 22, 23. *We shall come*, saith St. Paul, *to the General Assembly of the First-Born; to the Spirits of Just Men made Perfect; to an innumerable company of Angels, to God Judge of all, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant.* From this place it is most plain, that we cannot be with Christ, but we must be with God, with Angels, and with the Spirits of Just Men made perfect: And sure such Glorious Company cannot but make the Happiness of Paradise exceeding great.

1. I shew'd you, that we shall in Paradise be with all the Saints in Heaven; nor shall we barely be with them, but
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we shall know them. If the Three Disciples, who were admitted to Christ's Transfiguration, knew *Moses* and *Elias*, whom they had never seen before; no doubt but we, being fully illuminated, and perfectly Glorified in Heaven, shall know all the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Saints and Martyrs; and therefore our Saviour says expressly, Luke 13. 28. *That the Godly hereafter shall see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of God*: Thus we shall see and know all the Blessed Inhabitants of Heaven: Nor shall we only know them, but we shall have sweet Converse and Communion with them. To this purpose is that, Matt. 8.

11. *Many shall come from the East, and from the West, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven*. Sit down, that is, as the Original imports, they shall feast with them. And this sure does not only denote their mutual Knowledge each of other, but also the highest Caresses of Love and Friendship, such as this Metaphor of feasting is used in Scripture to denote. And this sure cannot but mightily inhanche the Happiness of Paradise: *David* accounted the Saints of

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God,

God, the most excellent Persons here upon Earth, and delighted in nothing so much as in their Society: But in Heaven they shall be made perfect; there they shall be freed from all those Human Infirmities and Imperfections which use to allay the solaces of their Conversation. Yea, on the contrary, they shall be adorned with all those Excellencies and Advantages which are requisite to make their Society most pleasant and desirable. And indeed we find the Disciples, at the Transfiguration, were so satisfied with the Company of *Moses* and *Elias*, two of these Glorious Inhabitants of Heaven, that they presently cry out, *it is good for us to be here*, and would have built Tabernacles, and have been content to have taken their rest on this side of Heaven. How much greater will their Happiness be, who shall enjoy the most ravishing Society of all the Blessed Inhabitants of Heaven! But,

2. We shall not only enjoy the Society of Saints, but of Angels too, So I have shewn you already, from *Heb. 12. 22.* where it is said, *We shall come to an innumerable Company of Angels.* Angels are

are far more glorious Creatures than the Saints, and therefore the enjoyment of them must needs be a farther addition to our happiness.

3dly, We shall also in Paradise be with Christ, in respect of his Humanity. *To day shalt thou be with me in Paradise: With me*, whom thou now seest hanging on the Cross. It was one of *St. Austin's* three famous Wishes to see Christ in the Body; but it shall be our happiness in Paradise, not barely to see Christ's Body, but also to see that Glory God has adorn'd it with there. To this purpose is that Prayer of our Saviour, *Joh. 17. 24. Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my Glory which thou hast given me.* We shall there see Christ sitting on the Right hand of Power, highly exalted above *Seraphims* and *Cherubims*; and the sight of all this Glory will rejoyce us the more, because our Human Nature is glorified in him.

4thly, The Godly, by being with Christ in Paradise, shall also be with God himself. *St. Paul* therefore giving a full Catalogue of that glorious Com-

pany we shall enjoy in Heaven, tells us, *Heb. 12. 22, 23.* that we shall not only come to the *General Assembly of the First-born*, and to an *innumerable Company of Angels*, and to *Jesus, the Mediatour of the New Covenant*; but he adds, *to God the Judge of all.* To enjoy the Company of Saints, Angels, and Christ, as Man, is Happiness great, beyond our utmost Imagination: But yet they are but as little Drops, if compared to that Ocean of Bliss, which will flow into the Soul upon the enjoyment of God himself. It was a Noble Saying of *Luthers*, That he had rather be in Hell with Gods presence, than in Heaven without it. Now if this Presence of God be able to convert even Hell it self into a kind of Heaven; the enjoyment of this must certainly make Heaven become what it is styled in Scripture, an *Heaven of Heavens*. This therefore is the Flower of our Joy, the Crown of Blessedness, and the very Soul of Heaven: For whilst we enjoy God, we must needs enjoy all things. All that is good did at first flow from him, and is therefore certainly more eminently to be found in Him, as in its Fountain

Fountain and Original. All that can delight our Souls, or ravish our Hearts; all that is lovely and desirable, are here to be found in their greatest perfections. Well then might the *Psalmist* say, *Psal.* 16. 11. *In thy presence, O God, there is fulness of Joy, and at thy right hand there are Pleasures for evermore.* But because this will be the Quintessence of our happiness in Heaven, we will enquire wherein it will consist. But,

I. Give me leave to premise this Caution, That in this *Vale of Misery* we cannot fully understand those Joys which God has prepared for us in Heaven: They are such, saith *St. Paul*, as *Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it entred into the heart of Man to conceive.* You'll find also *St. John* speaking the same Truth, *1 Joh. 3. 2. Beloved, now are we the Sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him.* As God gave *Moses* the sight of the Land of *Canaan* only, from *Mount Nebo*; so he gives us a prospect of the Heavenly, but it is at a distance: So that we do not fully here understand the greatness of our happiness;

and it is some honour and advantage to it, that it is so great, as that we cannot fully comprehend it : But so far as God in Scripture has revealed the happiness of Paradise to us, it will chiefly consist in these two Observations :

1st, A clear and perfect Knowledge of God, and his Infinite Perfections.

2^{dly}, In the enjoyment of him to all Eternity.

1st, Our happiness in Paradise will chiefly consist in a clear and perfect Knowledge of God, and his Infinite Perfections. *Knowledge* was the fairest Fruit that ever grew in the Earthly Paradise; and we cannot imagine the Paradise above should be compleat and perfect without it. Knowledge is so sweet and pleasant to the Soul, that the *Roman Oratour* calls it, *Naturale Animæ pabulum*, the most grateful and palatable Food of the Soul. It is dearer to us, saith *Aristotle*, than our Eyes, which are usually wasted and worn away in pursuits after it. Now as Knowledge in the general is thus sweet and pleasant to the Soul, so the nobler the Objects are which we know, the sweeter and more pleasant

pleasant must the Knowledge be. Now there can be no Object so noble and excellent as Almighty God: He is Infinite in Perfections, and therefore to have a clear and perfect Knowledge of his Infinite and Divine Perfections, must needs make a considerable part of our future happiness. Now it is plain from Scripture, that we shall have a clear and perfect knowledge of God in Heaven. Here it is that, as the Prophet *Esay* speaks, we shall see the King of Kings in all his beauty, *Esay* 33. 17. Indeed, the Soul here below, like the Spouse in the *Canticles*, seeks her Beloved only in the dark, beholds his Back-parts in the Glass of his Creatures, reads a little more of him in the *Holy Scripture*, and tastes a little more of him in his Comfortable Ordinances; yet still she sees him but darkly, and through the Lattice, and all is able to do no more, than to make her sick of Love: But hereafter we shall see God face to face, and we shall know him, even as we are known, *1 Cor.* 13. 12. We shall not then sit down content with the Schoolmans Negative Knowledge, and be proud, when we know only what God

is not : No, we shall then have a Positive Knowledge of him, and as St. *John* phrases it, *see him even as he is*, 1 Joh. 3.2. What strange Expressions are these ! How clear and how full a Knowledge of God do they import ! We shall no longer read of God in the Scripture, or hear of him by his Ministers, but we shall see him with our Eyes, yea, and we shall see him as he is, in all that wonderful Glory, which is the Light and Sun of the highest Heavens. Now how much such clear Knowledge of God will increase our future happiness, we may learn in some measure from the Story of the Queen of the South : The Queen of *Sheba* heard indeed some imperfect Reports of *Solomon's Wisdom* in her own Country ; but when she came and saw his Person, heard his incomparable Wisdom, and had been an happy Spectator of all the Pomp and Royal Magnificence of his Court, she was then sweetly astonished, so that *there was no more Spirit left in her* : Even so, when the pious Soul shall come to the Court of Heaven, and there see God, as he is cloathed with Majesty and Honour, infinitely beyond and above all she ever heard of him

him by his Ministers, or read of him in the Scripture; when she shall behold the Attendance of his Throne, even *Ten thousand times Ten thousand Angels*, and comprehend all those ineffable Glories, which neither Eye hath seen, nor Ear heard, with what pleasing Ecstasies of Admiration will she then be transported! But this is not all: For,

2dly, Our happiness in Paradise will not barely consist in the clear and perfect Knowledge of God; but also in the Enjoyment of him unto all Eternity. Knowledge without Fruition, can only give us the happiness of *Moses* upon *Mount Nebo*; at best, but a fairer prospect of the *Heavenly Canaan*: But we are assured in Scripture, that we shall not only see this *Land of Promise*, but we shall taste the *Milk* and the *Hony* of it: We shall not only see and know God, but we shall also enjoy him. This Enjoyment of God is elegantly set forth in Scripture by the Metaphor of a Feast, because Friends usually enjoy themselves most, when they Feast together. Now, what strange Expressions to this purpose are those which we read *Rev. 19. 9.* where the Angel bids *St. John* write thus:
Blessed

The Ninth Sermon.

Blessed are they which are called to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. They used to have their greatest Feasts at Supper; but the happiness of Heaven is here set forth, not only by the Metaphor of a Supper, but also of a *Marriage Supper*, to denote that more intimate and pleasant enjoyment of God and Christ the Saints may expect in Heaven: And lest we should in the least doubt of this, these Emphatical words are added, which perhaps ye do not use much to take notice of, but now I desire you to do; *These, saith the Angel, are the true Sayings of God:* So that we may well believe, the Saints shall enjoy all this happiness I have spoken of. Tho' this which I last mention'd, be a most comfortable Text, yet I think you'll find one fuller to this purpose, *Luke 12. 37. Blessed are those Servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching: Verily, I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.* Here again the happiness of Heaven is set forth by the Metaphor of a *Feast*; and our Saviour alludes to those Feasts among the *Romans*, which they called

called their *Saturnalia*; when the Masters were obliged to provide sumptuous Feasts for their Servants, and to gird themselves and come forth and serve. It seems God will deal thus with his poor unworthy Servants: He will prepare as great a Feast for them, as Heaven can afford, and will come forth himself and serve them. In this World he makes use of Angels, as *Ministring Spirits*, and employs them for the good of his People: But in the other World, the happiness of the Godly will be so great, and so infinite, that Angels being but Finite Creatures, cannot serve any longer as Conduits, to convey it to them: No, God himself, as he will be the Feast, so he will be the Entertainer too, and in a word, *All in all*. Thus I have shewn you, how great our happiness will be in respect of God himself; we shall have a clear and perfect knowledge of him and his infinite Excellencies, and we shall also have a full Enjoyment of him unto all Eternity. I proceed now to the last thing proposed, namely, to consider the greatness of this happiness, with reference to the place.

Lastly,

The Ninth Sermon.

Lastly, We shall not only be with Christ, but we shall be with Christ in Paradise. To be with Christ in any place, cannot but be happiness: Had our Saviour took the penitent Thief along with him, when he descended into Hell, there to have seen him triumph over *Principalities and Powers*, and all our Spiritual Enemies, this had been a blessed and most pleasant sight: But to carry him along with himself to Paradise, the pleasantness and glories of the place could not but add to the happiness of it. To this end you'll find the Holy Ghost in Scripture exceeding large in the description of this place, and it is set forth by such Metaphors as denote the most Incomprehensible, both beauty, pleasantness, strength, splendour, and glory: for Pleasure, it is in the Text called *Paradise*; for Magnificence, a *Kingdom*, yea, a *Kingdom of Glory* too: It is styled, *an House not made with hands*, but by God himself, to denote both its strength and workmanship: For Magnitude, it is called a *Great City*: For Purity, the *Holy and Heavenly Jerusalem*. Would we some Evening take a walk with *Isaac* into the Fields, and there

there view how God has garnished these upper Regions of the World, how many are those Stars which sparkle there? And they are also, most of them, of such an incredible Magnitude, as to be more than an hundred times bigger than the Earth; and yet this Firmament, as glorious as it is, is only the outside of the Pavement of that *Jerusalem* which is above. What Incomprehensible Glory then must shine within it! We read in the Book of *Revelations*, that the very *Streets are of pure Gold*, the *Walls and Foundations all of Precious Stones*: Such incredible lustre and glory is in it, that the *Sun* shall not need to give his Light, nor the *Moon* to shine in it; *for the Glory of God shall enlighten it, and the Lamb shall be the light thereof for ever.* Thus happy shall the Godly be after they depart this Life, they shall be with Christ, and which is more, they shall be with Christ in Paradise. I come now to draw some practical Inferences from what has been delivered.

Application.

Application.

1st, Has the Holy Ghost in Scripture made such discoveries of Paradise, and our future happiness; then certainly they ought to fill our Souls with earnest Longings, and vehement Pursuits after them. When King *Hezekiah* had shewn to the Ambassadors of *Baladan*, King of *Babylon*, the House of his Precious things, his *Silver* and his *Gold*, and all his *Treasures*; we read these finite perishing Treasures, proved Load-stones powerful enough to draw these *Babylonians* to War against *Judah*: How much more ought the Infinite Glories of *Heaven*, which God has revealed in the Scripture, raise such violent Desires in us, as may make us resemble the Spouse in the *Canticles*; who is compared to a *Pillar of Smoak*, mounting continually towards Heaven; or them who lived in the days of *John the Baptist*, who are said to have taken the Kingdom of Heaven by Violence. Such a temper of Spirit as this we find in the Saints of God: *My Soul fainteth for thy salvation; I have longed for it, saith Holy David,*
Psal.

Pfal. 119. 81. It is a remarkable Passage of *Cornelius a Lapide*, upon *Gen. 47.* where enquiring why the Patriarchs of old were so passionately desirous to have their Bones buried in the Land of *Canaan*, he gives this Reason: *God*, saith he, *had revealed unto these Holy men the Day of Christ; they all, as well as Abraham saw Christs Day and rejoiced: Not only the Day of his Nativity, but that more glorious Day of his Resurrection; In which not only Christ himself should rise, but others that slept should rise with him, and attend upon him into Heaven at his Ascension. These hopes of Rising with Christ, and getting sooner to Heaven, both in their Bodies and Souls, than others, made them thus careful and solicitous to be buried near the place where Christ was to rise. How unlike these Holy Patriarchs are many amongst us, whose heavy Souls move down to Earth, as to their Center: Neither God nor Heaven does ever so much trouble their Thoughts, as to make them breath forth their desires after them. But such as are true Believers, and sincere Christians, are in Scripture described by this known Periphrasis,*

phrasis, of being such as love the appearing of Christ; such as desire to be dissolved, that they may be with him; such as earnestly groan to be cloathed upon with their House which is from Heaven, and therefore pray often with the Bride in the Revelations, *Come Lord Jesus, come quickly.*

2dly, If we do earnestly and seriously desire this exceeding great happiness of Paradise, we must be willing to use the Means which will bring us to it. It is a known Maxim in the Schools, *Qui vult finem, vult media ad finem: He that effectually desires the End, desires also the Means which lead unto that End.* If, with the Thief upon the Cross, we expect after Death to enjoy Christ in Paradise, we must labour to imitate him, and give such demonstrations of our Humility, Faith in Christ, and sincere Repentance as he did. Our Saviour tells us, that the wise Merchant in the Gospel had no sooner found a Pearl of great Price, but he presently sold all he had and purchast it. It is reported of Camillus, that Famous French Commander, that when he had tasted some of the pleasant Grapes of Italy, he could never
be

be at rest, till he had raised a great Army, and Conquer'd that pleasant Country. God has been pleas'd in Scripture, to present us with some of the Grapes of *Canaan*, to give us some taste of the Heavenly gift, and the Powers of the World to come: How should this make us restless and unquiet, till we arrive at this happy Country? Should we not now raise all the Forces that we can to fight our Spiritual Enemies, and conquer those Lusts which oppose our happiness? Should we now spare any Sin, tho' it were as dear to us as a beloved *Jonathan*? Sure, Heaven will recompence the loss of a right Eye, and a right Hand, should we pluck them off and sacrifice them to our Saviour. And indeed we must thus forsake sin, every sin, the most darling sin, if ever we hope to get to Paradise. The *Young man* in the Gospel lacked but one thing, and yet fell short of Heaven: And if thou wilt still indulge thy self in thy Covetousness, Uncleaness, Swearing, Drunkenness, or any other known sin; thou canst never expect to be with Christ in Paradise.

The Ninth Sermon.

For Christ has told us plainly, *Mat. 19. 17.*
that if we will enter into Life, we must
keep the Commandments.

*Which that we may all do, God of his
Infinite Mercy grant, &c.*

SERMON

S E R M O N X.

Matt. xxiv. 30.

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven : and then shall all the Tribes of the Earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the Clouds of Heaven, with Power and great Glory.

TH E Office of our Blessed Saviours Mediatorship consists chiefly in three Parts, his Satisfaction, Intercession, and Judging the World at the Last Day. The First of these he performed here on Earth; the Second

he is still performing in Heaven ; and the Third he will perform in the Air, *When he shall come in the Clouds of Heaven, with Power, and great Glory.* We know he satisfied Infinite Justice, when he offered up himself a propitiatory Sacrifice on the Cross ; and he is still interceding in Heaven, at the Right Hand of God. As he purchased Salvation for sinners by dying for them, so he intercedes that this Salvation may be applied unto such as repent sincerely of their sins, and believe on his Name. The third part of his Mediatorship is still to be performed ; for he is not, as Mediator, to judge the World, till the time appointed by his Father ; and then he will for certain Judge both the Quick and the Dead. *Indeed the Father himself judgeth no Man, but hath committed all Judgment unto the Son,* as our Saviour speaks, *John 5. 22.* and he gives the reason of it, *vers. 27. because he is the Son of Man.* As he became the Son of Man, that he might be in a capacity to save the Penitent : So God has appointed the same Son of Man to judge the World, that he may be able to punish the Impenitent : Such as before would
not

not accept accept him for a Saviour, will now be forced to admit him as a Judge. Hence we are told, Act. 17. 31. *That God has appointed a Day, in which he will Judge the World in Righteousness; by that Man whom he hath Ordained, and whereof he has given us assurance, in that he hath raised him from the Dead.* Tho' we are not certain when the day of Judgment will come, that we may be always preparing for it; yet you see it is certain that there will be such a day, and that Christ, our Mediator, is ordained Judge: A happy day for all that are truly pious; they need not fear this Judge who is no other than their Merciful Saviour. But it will be a day of darkness and of gloominess unto the wicked; these will then mourn, *when they shall see this Son of Man coming with great Power and Glory*; so much we are told in the Text, *Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven, and then shall all the Tribes of the Earth Mourn; and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the Clouds of Heaven with Power and great Glory.* For the better understanding of these words, we will enquire.

First, Why Christ is called the Son of Man.

Secondly, What is here meant by the Sign of the Son of Man.

Thirdly, That this Son of Man will come to Judge the World.

Fourthly, That he will come with great Power and Glory.

Fifthly, That all the Wicked of the Earth will then have just cause to Mourn.

First, Let us briefly enquire why Christ is called the Son of Man. Some learned Men observe, that he is called so in the Scriptures more than forty times; and there are two reasons of the Name.

1st. He is called the Son of Man, in token of his Humanity. Christ our Blessed Mediator, was both God and Man; and therefore as he is often called the Son of God, to denote his Divinity; so he is as often called the Son of Man, to denote his Humanity.

2^{ly}. He is called the Son of Man, to denote that state of Humiliation, to which he condescended for our sakes. It was usual for the Jews to style Princes and Potentates בְּנֵי אֱדֹמִים Sons of strong

strong Men; but such as were poor they styled *Beni Adam*, Sons of Men. Christ therefore aspired to no higher title than that of Son of Man: He was pleased to humble himself for us. He, as the Apostle speaks, *became poor, that we might become rich*. Born he was of the poorest Parents, such as neither had an House of their own to lay him in when he was born, nor able to procure any place besides a Stable for his reception into this World. And as he was born in this poor condition; so tho' *the Birds of the Air have Nests*, as he speaks, yet whilst he lived, *he had not*, of his own where to lay his Head. Nay, further yet, when he came to die, we know he was beholding to the Charity of *Joseph of Arimathea* for a room in his Sepulchre. No wonder then if Christ be ambitious of no more Honourable Title than this *of Son of Man*, since he made himself so vile, so mean, so contemptible for our sakes. Thus I have briefly shewn why Christ is called so often the Son of Man; it denotes the truth of his Humanity, as also that state of Humiliation, to which he condescended for our sakes.

I come now in the second place to enquire,

Secondly, What is here meant by the sign of the Son of Man. It would spend too much of our time to mention all those conjectures, which learned Men have made concerning this Sign, since it is a matter we may safely be ignorant of. I shall only set down two of the best Interpretations I have met.

1st. Very many Learned Men, both Antient and Modern, do by the sign of the Son of Man, understand the Cross. *St. Jerom*, *St. Chrysostom* and Venerable *Bede*, upon this place, affirm this Sign to be no other than that of the Cross. The *Ethiopian* Church is so peremptory in this matter, that it is put into the Articles of their Creed, as the Learned *Gregory* informs us. There is hardly any thing the Antient Fathers are more unanimous in than this: And to say the truth, there is some tolerable Reason for this Antient Opinion. For what can be more Honourable to our Lord and Saviour, or more full of Terror to his Enemies, than that the Cross of Christ, which they counted foolishness; and more than so, esteemed the greatest reproach

proach of the Christian Faith, should at that day be made the Herald to Proclaim his coming, and call all Nations of the World to appear before him? But tho' this interpretation be backt both with Reason and great Authorities; Yet,

2^{ly}. There is another interpretation that seems as plausible, if not more plausible than it: For the learned *Vossius*, *Mede*, *Twisse*, *Millet*, and several others, do understand by the Sign of the Son of Man, who is a Sign. This kind of Dialect, this manner of Speaking is frequent in the Scripture; thus the Law of Faith is all one with Faith that is a Law, the Law of Sin, that is, sin it self, which dwelling in unregenerate Persons, reigns as it were by Law. So the Sign of the Son of Man, that is, the Son of Man who is a Sign. And that which gives the greatest Authority to this Opinion, is that *St. Luke*, in the parallel place, interprets it so, *Chap. 21. 27.* where the word Sign is left out, and the Verse runs thus, *Then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a Cloud, with Power and great Glory.* And *St. Mark* renders the words the same way, *Chap.*

13. 26. If therefore St. *Mark* and St. *Luke* may be allowed to be as good Interpreters of St. *Matthew* as any other, by the Sign of the Son of Man, we may understand the Son of Man himself, whose Glorious Appearance in the Clouds will be a certain infallible sign that the day of Judgment is come. Thus I have shewn you what Conjectures learned Men have made concerning this Sign of the Son of Man : some understand the Cross, others Christ himself, whose Glorious appearance will be a certain sign of the approaching Judgment. I come now in the third place to shew you,

Thirdly, That this Son of Man will come to judge the World. None but that God who made us, has any right to judge us. As we have received all things from him; so as Stewards, must we render an account of all things to him. Indeed this Judgment belongs originally to the whole Trinity ; but the outward administration of it shall be committed to the Son of Man. So we are told expressly in the Text, *Then shall ye see the Son of Man coming in the Clouds of Heaven*. Thus you see the Judgment of the last Day is committed to the Son

Son of Man ; and indeed it is committed to him, *because he is the Son of Man* ; our Saviour tells us so expressly, John 5. 26, 27. *As the Father has life in himself, so hath he given unto the Son to have life in himself, and has given him Authority to execute Judgment also, because he is the Son of Man.* Ye see the Son of Man will come as Judge at the last day, and he comes, because he is the Son of Man. It will not be amiss to enquire briefly into the Reasons of it.

1st, God has committed the Judgment of the last Day to the *Son of Man*, because he has appointed it should be Visible. This is fairly hinted in the Text, where it is said, *they shall see the Son of Man coming in the Clouds of Heaven.* God himself is a Spirit, and consequently Invisible ; but the *Son of Man* is Visible, and therefore he is appointed to Ride the Circuit, that he may be seen of all his Enemies : And that we might take the more notice of this Reason, it is repeated again Chap. 26. 64. where Christ tells his Enemies, that *hereafter they shall see the Son of Man sitting on the Right hand of Power, and coming*

The Tenth Sermon.

coming in the Clouds of Heaven. It seems the *Son of Man* shall come, and his Enemies shall see him, and be confounded at the sight of him. This may be farther confirm'd from *Act. 1. 11.* where you'll find the Angels preaching this Doctrin; *This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into Heaven.* The Comparison is here made between our Saviour's Ascending into Heaven, and his returning again to Judgment: *Ascendit visibiliter, & descendit visibiliter: He ascended, saith Gerhard, in a visible manner, and he shall descend to Judgment in a visible manner too.*

2dly, God has committed the Judgment of the last Day to the *Son of Man*, for the reward of his Obedience, and greater Exaltation of his Human Nature. It is but Justice in God to make this *Son of Man* Judge of the World, seeing he came into the World, and was judged by it. It is but equal to invest Christ with a power of Absolution and Condemnation; seeing he was Condemned by us to die, and died that he might be in a capacity to Absolve us. It is but reason-

reasonable that all the Sons of Men should bow before his Throne, and submit to his Judgment, who disdain'd not for our sakes, to stand before the Tribunal of Wicked Men, and receive the Sentence of Condemnation. To this purpose are those Expressions of St. Paul, Phil. 2:8,9. *Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto the death, even the death of the Cross: Wherefore God also has highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow.* He that came at first to save us, must it seems come at last to judge us: And, it is but just, that he who before carried a Reed in his hand, and was derided by his Enemies, should hereafter Iway a Scepter of Righteousness, and break his Enemies in pieces with a Rod of Iron. But,

3dly, God has committed the Judgment of the last Day to the Son of Man, for the greater Comfort and Consolation of the Godly. What a joyful sight will it be unto all sincere Penitents, when they shall see the Advocate become their Judge, and none but their Saviour sitting

ring on the Throne of Glory? For he knows all the Frailties and Infirmities of our Natures: *He knoweth our frame, and remembreth that we are but Dust:* Yea, he will yet be more ready to pity us, seeing he was pleased to assume our Natures, bear our Infirmities, and to be tempted in all things like as we are. Well then may the Godly be said in Scripture, to long for this *glorious appearance of the Lord Jesus*. Well may the Bride in the *Revelations* cry, *Come Lord Jesus, come quickly*; seeing this Day of Judgment will be to her, no other than the Day of Nuptials: A Day in which Christ will be married to his People, and admit them unto the nearest Union and Communion with himself, and that unto all Eternity.

4thly, God has committed the Judgment of the last Day to the Son of Man, for the greater Terror and Confusion of the Wicked. The Angels, who were present at our Saviours Ascension, tell his Disciples, *Act. I. II.* that *the same Jesus who then ascended into Heaven, should descend in like manner as he then ascended up into Heaven*. Now, we know our Saviour, when he ascended
into

into Heaven, carried along with him the print of the Spear, and all those Scars which were made by the Nails and Thorns: And these it seems he will bring along with him, when he returns to Judgment. How then will the *wicked mourn*, as we are told in the Text, *when they look upon him whom they had formerly pierced!* Those Wounds which were at first opened to heal their Souls, will now open their Mouths and call for Vengeance on them. Christ's *Eyes*, saith St. John, will now become *flames of Fire*, and such as will certainly consume them; his *Feet*, like *fine Brass* burning in a Furnace, and cannot but destroy them. Well may the Wicked call then upon the *Rocks to cover*, and the *Mountains to hide them*; since the *presence of the Lamb* will be infinitely more dreadful, than the presence of the fiercest Lion. For unto such as have trampled this Son of God and Man under foot; unto such as have counted *the Blood of the Covenant an unholy thing*; unto such I say, there will now remain nothing, but a certain *fearful looking for of Judgment and fiery Indignation*, which shall devour these Adversaries. Thus I have dispatch'd
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the Third General, and shewn you, that this *Son of Man* must come at the last Day to Judge the World, and the Reasons of it. I come now,

Fourthly, In the Fourth place to shew you, that *He will come with great Power and Glory*. This is plainly deliver'd in the Text, *Then shall they see the Son of Man coming in the Clouds of Heaven, with Power and great Glory*. And,

1st, He will come with great Glory. And,

2dly, He will come with Power.

1st, Let us consider the greatness of that Glory with which this *Son of Man* shall come to Judge the World. Tho' his first coming into the World was mean and contemptible, clouded with Poverty and Grief, and such other humble Circumstances as were proper for his state of Humiliation; yet his second Coming will be splendid and glorious, as will appear from these following Particulars:

1st, Let us consider the immediate Fore-runners and Harbingers of our Saviour's *Second Coming*. Kings and Princes have their Harbingers, and so has this King of Kings too. St. Jerome tells us

of

of an Ancient Tradition of the Jewish Doctors, namely, that for fifteen Days together, before the great Day of Judgment, there shall be transacted upon the Stage of Nature, a continued scene of fearful Signs and Wonders: *The Sea shall lift up its mountainous Billows, and make a fearful noise with its rouling Waves: The Heavens shall crack night and day with loud and roaring Thunders: The Earth shall groan under hideous Convulsions, and quotidian Earthquakes: The Air shall blaze with portentous Comets: The Moon shall shed forth Purple streams of discolour'd Light: The Sun shall shroud himself in perpetual Darknefs; and the rest of the Stars shall suffer themselves to be hid in dismal Obscurity. Thus the whole frame of Nature shall be hung with Mourning, a little before the approach of the Day of Judgment.* Nor is this only a Tradition of the Jews; but is also the Prediction of our Saviour, who tells us in the Verse foregoing the Text, that *in those days the Sun shall be darken'd, and the Moon shall not give her light; and the Stars shall fall from Heaven, &c. and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man.* Such Harbingers, such Fore-

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runners

runners as these, do abundantly declare the glorious coming of our Saviour to Judgment. But,

2dly, His glorious coming to Judgment will yet farther appear, if we consider the transcendent lustre of his own Person. How beautiful, how glorious is our Blessed Saviour, whilst he now sits at the right hand of God? He is now cloathed with *Light*, as with a garment; and his Human Nature does far surpass the globe of the Sun for lustre. What an astonishing description of his Glory is given, *Rev. 1. 13, &c. In the midst of the seven Candlesticks was one like the Son of Man: His Head was white as Wool, and his Locks were white as the Snow: His Eyes were as a flame of Fire, and his Countenance was as the Sun shining in his strength.* Thus glorious is Christ in his own Person: Wherever he goes he carries Day along with him, and therefore when at the Last day he shall descend from the Right hand of his Father, to that part of the Air where he will fix his Throne, he will appear like a large walking Star, sparkling with beams of Majesty and dazling Glory. And this is called in Scripture Christ's
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own glory, *Luke 9. 26. When the Son of Man shall come in his own Glory.*

But,

3dly, This glory of Christs own Person will receive additional lustre from the glory of his Attendants. This Son of Man, when he comes to judge the World, he will not come alone, but he will come attended with Myriads of Saints and Angels. St. Jude has Recorded an ancient Prophecy of *Enoch's* to this purpose, *ver. 14, 15. Behold, saith he, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his Saints, to execute Judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly, of all their ungodly deeds.* Now how will the attendance of so many glorious Saints add to the lustre of this great Day? We are told in Scripture, that *the just shall shine with the brightness of the Sun.* What an amazing spectacle then will it be, to see this Son of Man descend from his Imperial Seat, far above all Heavens, and coming in the Clouds with a glorious Train of shining Saints, all following him with Crowns of Glory on their Heads, and the most ravishing *Hallelujah's* in their Mouths. But he will not be attended only with innumerable

of his Saints ; but Myriads of Angels will also augment his Train. Hence in *Luke 9.26* it is said, that he shall come in his own glory , and in his Fathers, and of his holy Angels. All the Angels of Heaven will deck themselves with all their Ornaments of Light , and wait upon our Saviour , when he comes to triumph over his Enemies. We know these glorious Beings attended on him at his Birth , and when he was but in a state of Humiliation ; and therefore we need not question, but they will add to the pomps and triumphs of this glorious Day. Well then may our Saviour be said in the Text *to come with glory*, when he shall come attended with all the Hosts of Heaven , with an innumerable Retinue of glorious Saints and Angels. But this is not all : For,

4^{thly} , The great glory of Christ's coming to Judgment will yet farther appear, if we consider the glory of his Throne : According to the transcendent Majesty of his Person , so shall his Throne be, even a *Throne of Glory* : Hence is that of *St. Matthew, Chap. 25. 31.* *When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the Holy Angels with him,*
then

then shall he sit upon the Throne of his Glory. Now what this Throne of Glory will be, is fairly hinted in the Text, where it is said, that *the Son of Man will come at the last day in the Clouds of Heaven*. Christ will sit on a bright radiant Cloud, when he keeps the General Assizes of the last Day. This may farther be gather'd from the Testimony of the Angels, *Act. 1. 11.* where they tell his Disciples at his Ascension, that *the same Jesus who was then taken up into Heaven, will so come in like manner, as they saw him then go up into Heaven*. Now if you will know how he ascended into Heaven, the 9th verse will inform you, where it is said, that *He was taken up, and a Cloud received him out of their sight*. Now as he rode up to Heaven on a radiant Cloud, so will he in like manner come riding down from thence. No wonder then if we read often in the *Revelations*, of *Thunderings and Lightnings coming out of the Throne of Christ*: For these roaring Meteors are ordinarily discharg'd from some terrible Cloud. Christ therefore will sit on a bright shining Cloud, when he shall Judge the World: And indeed this is

the general Opinion of the *Jews*, as Learned Men observe: For this is a Common Saying among them, as *Raimundus* reports, *If ever the Jews deserve that the Messias should come, he shall come gloriously, according to the Prophet Daniel, i.e. in the Clouds of Heaven.* Now how will such a bright shining Throne, hanging in the Air, add to the lustre of our Saviours appearing? For the Heathens, when they would describe the glorious Majesty of their Deities, were wont to bring them wrapt up in some bright and radiant Cloud. Thus *Homer* represents one of the Gods coming to *Diomedes*: ——— νεφέλῃ εἰλύμενθ' ὤμους.
With his Shoulders wrapt up in a Cloud: And so *Virgil* represents *Jupiter* coming to assist *Æneas* in a *bright shining Cloud.* Thus both *Jews* and *Gentiles* looked upon a *bright Cloud*, as a glorious sign and character of a Divine Majesty. Thus I have shewn you with what Glory and Majesty the Son of Man will appear at the last Day: His Appearing will be usher'd in with dreadful Harbingers and Fore-runners; He will descend with all the glory and lustre of his own person: He will come attended with a glorious

Retinue

Retinue of shining Saints and Angels; and he will sit upon a Throne of Glory, namely, a bright and radiant Cloud. All this will be sufficient to shew you, that the *Son of Man at the last Day will come in the Clouds with great glory.* Before I proceed farther, I shall crave leave to draw one or two Inferences from what has been already delivered. And

First, We may learn from hence, the place which is appointed for the Judgment of the last Day. This place it seems will be the Air; for ye hear our Saviour is to have a *bright shining Cloud* for his Throne; and is said accordingly in the Text, to *come in the Clouds of Heaven.* To the same purpose is what we read *1 Thess. 4. 17.* where we are told, that *the Righteous shall be caught up in the Clouds, and meet the Lord in the Air:* And indeed the Air is a most proper place for our Saviour to keep his great Assizes: For being here advanc'd some distance above the Earth, he will more easily be seen by all the Inhabitants of it. Nay farther yet, this is now the Seat of the Devils Empire. Satan we know is called *the Prince of*

the Air; and the Infernal Fiends are styled *Spiritual Wickednesses in high places*. Here therefore will the Son of Man fix his Judgment Seat; here he will place his Throne: That all the World may know, that he has now spoiled Principalities and Powers, and got a compleat and perfect Victory over these his malicious Enemies. Then is the time when he will trample Satan under his Feet, and put a full Period to that Tyranny which he has exercised so long over the Sons of Men.

Secondly, We may infer from hence, what deep Impressions such Doctrins as these ought to make upon us. The News of our Saviours coming to Judgment with all this Glory, should cause us take the greatest Care imaginable, to fit and prepare our selves to meet him at this great Day. We have a remarkable Instance to this purpose in Ecclesiastical History, which is attested by many and great Authors. It seems about Four hundred years after our Saviours Ascension, one *Gregentius*, a Bishop, endeavour'd the Conversion of those *Jews* which liv'd in *Arabia Felix*; after a tedious Disputation of three days continuance

rinuance, some of the *Jews* desired the Bishop to shew them *Jesus* alive, and it would convince them : Immediately upon this the Earth began to tremble, and the Sky to shine and eccho with Lightnings and Thunder : After these ceased, the Gates of the Celestial Palace open'd, and a bright serene Cloud appear'd, darting forth Beams of an extraordinary lustre : At last our Blessed Saviour shewed himself, walking on this bright Cloud ; and a Voice was heard from this Excellent Glory , saying, *I am he who was Crucified by your Fathers.* This glorious Appearance cast all the *Jews* prostrate on the ground, and beating their Breasts , they cried with a loud Voice , *Lord, have mercy on us ;* and afterwards were Baptized into the Faith of Christ. A like account we have of the Conversion of *St. Paul*, Act. 9. 3, &c. where we read, that as he journied towards *Damascus*, breathing forth nothing but Rage and Malice against Christians, suddenly there shined round about him a Light from Heaven ; and he heard a Voice saying unto him, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ?* Upon which he trembling and astonished said, *Lord, what*

what wilt thou have me to do? Such effects as these are the Natural Attendants of such great and glorious Appearances as these: And ought they not to have the same influence upon us? What tho' they are not made to the Eye of our Sense, yet in Scripture they are made to the Eye of our Faith. If we are sincere Christians, and do heartily believe the Gospel, we have no more reason to doubt of this Coming of our Saviour *with great power and glory*, than if we were actual Spectators of it. Let us therefore bethink our selves, *what manner of persons we ought to be in all holy and godly Conversation*. If we were certain this great Day were near at hand, I am confident we would walk more circumspectly, *not as fools, but as wise*: We would then soon be persuaded to break off our League with Sin, and endeavour, by a sincere and speedy Repentance, to make a firm Peace with our God and Saviour. I shall not pretend to tell you the precise time of this Day of Judgment; but this I can assure you, that several Learned and Pious Divines, who have lately enquired into the Scripture Prophecies with great acuracy and diligence,

diligence, do tell us, that this great Day is even at the door, and that we may expect this glorious Appearance of the *Son of Man* in a very short time. But tho' they should be mistaken in their Conjectures, yet this is most certain that it will come at last, and that the time of our Life, which is all the time we have to prepare for it, is exceeding short. Let us therefore beseech Almighty God, that we all may be found such wise and faithful Servants, as are described v. 46. then shall we with joy meet our Saviour in the Air, and make a part of his glorious Train, when he returns to the highest Heaven; giving, as is most due, all *Honour and Glory unto him that sitteth on the Throne, and unto the Lamb for evermore.*

Let us therefore beseech Almighty God, to give us Grace so to redeem our time, that we may be found in the number of his wise and faithful Servants; then shall we at the Day of Judgment meet our Saviour in the Air, and return with him to the Highest Heavens, singing Praises and Hallelujahs unto him that sits upon the Throne, and to the Lamb for evermore. Amen, Amen.

S E R M O N X I.

Prov. xvi. 9.

A mans heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps.

WHat great Esteem and Veneration the Ancient World entertain'd of Proverbs, may easily be learned from the Writings of *Aristotle*: He tells us in his Rhetorick, that they always allowed them the next place to Oracles: And in other

other parts of his Writings, he gives them the noble Epithet of ἱσχυροτάτοις, as if they were the very Extract and Quintessence of Refined Wisdom. The Divine *Solomon* sets them yet higher, and thinks them worthy to be placed in the very Throne; for *Prov.* 8.6. he styles them כְּנִיּוֹת, which tho' our Translation renders only *Excellent words*, *Gegerus*, and other Learned Criticks translate them more agreeably to the Hebrew, *Princes of Words*: Intimating thus much to us, That these Divine Sentences, which are called *Proverbs*, excel as much other Schemes of Speech, as Kings and Princes do their ordinary Subjects. But tho' *Proverbs* in the general have so much of Majesty in them, and have always challenged a particular veneration from the Sons of Men: Yet the *Proverbs* of Holy Writ are farther commended to us from the very Inscription and Title Page of the Book. It is a known Observation of Learned Men, that neither the Books of *Moses*, *Joshuah*, nor other Pen-men of Sacred Writ, are recommended to the World by the Name of the Author, till we come to this Book of *Proverbs*; as

it

if the Holy Ghost had designed some extraordinary advantage to this Heavenly Book, when in the very Front of it was prefix'd the most August Name of *Solomon Son of David, King of Israel*; and we may be sure the Queen of the South will rise up in Judgment against us at the last Day, if we do not give our best Attention to these Excellent Words of *Solomon*; that *Solomon*, who was once a Famous and Renowned King of *Israel*, and who besides those Advantages of Education which he received from the pious Care of his Father King *David*, was also inspired with Wisdom from on High, and endued with such Understanding and Largeness of Heart, as was commensurate to the Sand of the boundless Ocean. Besides what has hitherto been said concerning the excellency of Proverbs in general, and these of *Solomon* in particular, there is one Observation still behind, which will yet farther recommend the Text to your best Attention. For of all those three Thousand Proverbs, which are Recorded as the products of *Solomon's* Wisdom, there is not any one the Holy Ghost has thought fit

to repeat so often, or inculcate more frequently, than this of the Text; for it is repeated thrice in this one Chapter, besides what it is in other places of this Book of *Proverbs*. In all which places the Wise man gives us to understand, that the wonderful Providence of God does rule and govern all the Actions of Men. The Metaphor of a *Way*, which is here used in the Text, is known in Scripture to denote all the Actions of Men, whether good or evil: And according to this latitude, the Metaphor here used is understood variously by Divines: St *Cyprian* refers it to the good Actions of Men, and accordingly interprets the Text thus, *Cor viri cogitet justa, ut à Deo dirigantur gressus ejus: Let the Heart of Man, saith he, think righteous things, that so his goings may be directed by the Lord.* But tho' this be a very great Truth, namely, that Good Actions are govern'd and directed by the Providence of God, yet others rather understand the Text of mens wicked Actions; for the Hebrew word *חשב*, which we render *Deviseth*, is for the most part used in a bad sense; and what we render *Man*, is *Adam* in the Original

Original, which according to *Luther's* known Observation is seldom taken in a good sense: So, that the words taken in this limited and restrained sense, will run thus; *A mans Heart, i. e. the Heart of Adam, or of a wicked Man, deviseth and contriveth his wicked ways; but the Lord, by his wonderful Providence, governeth and directeth all his steps. The Heathen may rage, as the Psalmist speaks, and the People devise vain things; yet he that sitteth in Heaven shall laugh them to scorn, the Lord shall have them in derision.* God, as he is Omniscient, can easily know all the wicked devices of sinful Men; and as he is Omnipotent, he can as easily over-rule them, and direct them so as may be most for his own Glory and the good of his People. God, He is no idle Spectator in this vast Theatre of the World; but doth continually, as the *Psalmist* speaks, *whatsoever pleaseth him both in Heaven and in Earth.* Indeed, he has made Man a free Agent; and therefore as the *Son of Sirach* speaks, *He leaves him in the Counsel of his own hand, and allows him to act according to the liberty of his Will:* But then, as the Wise Rector and Almighty

mighty Governor of the Universe, He over-see's and over-rules all the Actions and Devices of wicked Men; so that such as will not do him true and laudable service, by obeying the known Will of his Precept, are forced to obey the secret Will of his Providence, and are made subservient to his Everlasting Counsels. Thus, tho' the *Heart of a wicked man deviseth his wicked ways; yet the Lord governeth and directeth all his steps.* For the fuller opening of which Words, I design to confine my present discourse to the discovering of these two things.

First, How the over ruling Providence of God is employed about sin and wickedness whilst it is but *in fieri*, or the Heart of Man is but yet devising it. And,

Secondly, How it governs and directs sin *in facto esse*, when sin is brought forth into act. And,

First, Of the First, how Gods over-ruling Providence is employed about sin whilst it is yet but *in fieri*, whilst the *Heart of Man is yet but contriving and devising it.* And this will appear in some measure from these following Considerations.

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1st.

The Eleventh Sermon.

1st. God's Providence orders and directs sin and wickedness to such objects as he thinks fit. It is a true saying of *Hugo de Sancto Victo*, i. e. *Deus not dat malis voluntatibus corruptionem, sed tantum ordinem*, God, saith he, never infuses any corruption or wickedness into the Wills of Men, but only gives Order and Direction to their Wicked Actions. All the preparations and contrivances of sin are from the depraved hearts of Men; the ordering of them to particular and suitable objects from the good providence of God. As the Huntsman in *Bellarmines* comparison, holds the Hound in a Slip, and suffers him only to run at such Game as he best liketh: So God keeps a constant Watch upon the Wicked, he puts his Hook in their Nose, and his Bridle in their Lips, and suffers not their Rage to break forth, but only on such persons as he thinks fit. We know Gods Providence extended it self to the very Swine, and would not suffer Satan to enter into them without his particular Warrant; and sure then we need not doubt but this Providence of God is more eminently concerned about Man, whom he was pleased to make after his own

own Image and likeness. God does therefore set a Guard upon the malice of Satan and his Instruments, nor can it break forth but as he permits it; sometimes on his Enemies for their destruction, and sometimes on his own People for their chastisement: A proof of the latter we have, *Isa. 10. 5, 6, 7.* at the 5th Verse *Sennacherib King of Assyria is called the Rod of God's Anger, and the Staff of his Indignation*; which metaphorical expressions import thus much, that Men are but Instruments in the Hand of God's Providence, and must expect the direction of a superiour Cause. Now this *Assyrian*, this *Sennacherib* is said to be sent and directed against *Israel*, an hypocritical Nation, and now become the People of God's Wrath. And at the 7th Verse we find that this Staff of God's Indignation was more in the Hand than in the Heart of this proud *Assyrian*: *Howbeit, saith God, he meaneth not so, neither doth his Heart think so; but it is in his Heart to destroy, and to cut off Nations, not a few.* There was no need God should instill any wickedness into the Heart of *Sennacherib*, who is here in the Prophet called the *Assyrian*; it

seems it was full enough, and too full before. *Berosus*, an Antient Historian, has left this Character of him, *Sennacherib, qui apud Assyrios regnabat, omnem Asiam & Ægyptum bello infestabat, Sennacherib*, saith he, *who was King of the Assyrians, vexed and infested all Asia and Ægypt with Bloody Wars.* Ye see the Head and Heart of this *Assyrian* were full enough of devices how to satisfy his Ambition, and raise his Empire on the Ruins of other Nations. And now was the time for God's Providence to step in and determine him to what Object he thought most proper. He therefore directs the fury of this *Assyrian* chiefly against *Israel*, and uses him as a Rod to chastise his own chosen People. And as God does thus employ the wicked, as Schoolmasters, to correct his People; so he also employs them as Executioners to punish his Enemies. Hence, *Isaiah* 13. 17. God is said to stir up the *Medes* against the *Babylonians*, a People notorious for their Enmity to God, and the *Jews*. These *Medes* and *Persians*, are upon this account, called God's *sanctified ones*, Verse 3. not in respect of any inherent righteousness or holiness

holiness in them, but because, like the Vessels of the Sanctuary, set a-part for God's service, and excited by a secret-instinct of Providence, to execute wrath upon wicked *Babylon*. Thus God turns the Hearts of Kings, as the Rivers of Waters, whithersoever he pleaseth. Tho' their Hearts be very full of wickedness, and like the troubled Sea, are always ready to cast up the Mire and Dirt of Sin, yet God's Providence shuts up this Sea with Bars that it cannot pass, till God is pleased to break up these Bars, and let it rush sometimes on his Enemies, to overwhelm them; sometimes on his own People to chastise them, and wash away their Filth.

2/y. The Providence of God does not only determine the wickedness of Man, as to the Object, but likewise as to the *Modus*, and Measure of it. If God did not bound the Malice of Satan and wicked Men, their little Finger would be bigger than their Loins are now; and instead of Chastising God's People with Whips, like cruel *Rehoboam*, they would scourge them with Scorpions. When God was pleased to break down the Hedge of his Providence, he had

set about *Job*, with what Fury did the *Sabæans* and *Chaldeans* kill his Servants, drive his Camels and spoil him of all his Goods? Nor did all this mischief satisfy Satans Malice; he would fain have gone further, and made attempts upon his Life: But God here was pleased to set limits to his Fury, as we read, *Job* 2. 6. *Behold, saith God to Satan, he is now in thine Hand; only spare his Life.* I need not spend much time in proving the boundless Malice of Satan, and his Instruments against God's People; we may learn enough of this, from that remarkable Name the Prophet bestows upon them, *Isaiah* 27. 1. *In that day the Lord, with his great and strong Sword, shall punish Leviathan, the peircing Serpent.* By *Leviathan* in this place, is generally understood Satan and his malicious Instruments; and the word in the Hebrew signifies Augmentation or Addition, intimating the boundless Malice of Satan and his Instruments, who still desire to lay more burdens on the Godly, to increase their Troubles and augment their Afflictions. But God, he is faithful and merciful, and by his Providence takes care, that his People be not

not tempted above what they are able to bear: And therefore the same Prophet tells us at Verse 8. *That God allows Satan and his Instruments to smite his People only in measure.* There is a greater Elegance in the Hebrew, than is exprest in our English Translation; for the word which we render Measure, signifies one of the smallest Measures in use among the Jews. namely, that Measure which they called the Sea, containing no more than the third part of an Ephah. Such you see is the wonderful goodness of God, that he curbs and restrains the Fury of those Leviathans; and tho' they think no Strokes too many, no Burdens too heavy for the People of God, yet he limits their Malice, and allows them only to smite in Measure, and with Moderation.

3/y. The Providence of God does also determin the Malice and Wickedness of Men, as to its time and duration. There is indeed a great and sad truth in the observation of the Antient Tragedian, *Nullum ad nocendum tempus angustum è malis*, No time, saith he, is too little, no time unreasonable for the Wicked to do Mischief; yet there is some

comfort in what the Wise Man tells us, Eccles. 3. 1. *That God has set a Season to every Thing, and a Time to every Purpose under Heaven.* And indeed the Providence of God does limit the Wicked, both as to the time, when their Fury shall begin, and also how long it shall continue. Our Blessed Saviour was no sooner born into the World, but there was a bloody *Herod* seeking to destroy him, and send him out of it again: Afterwards when he was to enter upon his Ministry, we find Satan carrying him to a Pinacle of the Temple, and tempting him to cast himself down from that dangerous height: and when all this proved successless, several stratagems were used by the *Jews* to dispatch him out of this World. But God who has put Times and Seasons in his own Power, defeated all these their wicked purposes, till that determinate time was come, mentioned by St. Luke 22. 53. *Tho' I was with you daily in the Temple, saith Christ, yet ye could not stretch forth any hands against me; but now is your hour and the power of Darknes.* And as the Wickedness of Man is limited, in respect of its beginning, so likewise in
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respect of its continuance and duration. Thus God determined the afflictions of *Israel* in *Ægypt* four hundred years; and their Captivity in *Babylon* to seventy. If God had not predetermined the persecutions of the Primitive Christians, St. *John* could not have foretold they should last no longer than forty two Months. Now if we reckon these Months by Sabbaths of Years (as the honest Author of the Book of Martyrs tells us, he was taught to reckon them by a particular Revelation) they will amount to the sum of two hundred ninety four years, the precise time of the ten first Persecutions. I shall add but one instance more of these effects of God's Providence, and that one is hinted to me by a Right Reverend Historian of our own Nation. It seems in Queen *Mary's* days, *Gardiner* and the other bloody Papists hoped to continue their persecution of the Protestants till they had utterly destroyed them: But God's good Providence allowed them but a very short time to rage in; for when Queen *Mary* fell into that kind of Dropsie, which Physitians call the *Mola*, the wisest of her Friends and Physitians

sicians were so far infatuated, as to conclude her to be with Child. By this means all Physick was forbid, till her Distemper grew desperate, and so her unexpected death put a speedy period to the Rage and Fury of the Papists. Thus I have shewn you how the Providence of God is employed about sin and wickedness whilst it is *in fieri*, whilst the Heart of Man is but conceiving and devising it. I now proceed to shew how the same Providence is employed about sin *in facto esse*, after it is finish'd and brought forth into Act. Tho' Almighty God can wither the Arm of a wicked *Jeroboam*, and hinder the Execution of his wicked Designs: Tho' he can strike the Sinner with a Thunderbolt into Hell before he accomplishes his mischievous Enterprises; yet having made Man a free Agent, as I said before, he allows him to act according to the liberty he has implanted in his Nature. *Ratio non est absque libertate Arbitrii*, saith *Damascen*, there can be no Reason, where there is no liberty to act. But tho' God does permit the heart of man freely to devise and accomplish its ways, yet still by his Providence, he rules and directs

directs his Steps. Indeed the wicked themselves are far from designing any good, but yet God makes their blackest designs subservient to his glory. They do at best but resemble those monstrous People, in *Pliny*, whose Feet stood contrary to their Faces, or, if you please, to take a more familiar comparison, 'like Watermen, they are made by Providence to row one way whilst they look another. To this purpose is the known observation of *St. Austin*, *Bonus Deus non sineret fieri mala, nisi Omnipotens ex malis bona elicere potuisset*, God who is good, saith he, would never permit sin, but that being Omnipotent, he is able to extract Good out of the greatest Evils. The Rod of *Moses*, whilst it lay upon the Earth, was an ugly, dreadful, and poysonous Serpent, but in the Hand of God and *Moses* an Instrument of great and glorious wonders. Such is the Power and Wisdom of God, that he is able to bring Light out of Darkness, and work great and glorious ends out of most the black devices and machinations of sinful Men. Some few Instances of this I shall give you in these following particulars:

1st.

1st. God does often take occasion from sin, to glorifie the Riches of his Goodness and Mercy. It is the Tradition of the Antients, that the Skull of *Adam* was found on Mount *Calvary*, the very place of our Saviours Crucifixion. And there is not less Comfort in St. *Jeroms* Note on *Mat. i.* Namely, that no holy Women, but such Notorious Sinners as *Thamar*, *Raah* and *Bathsheba* are mentioned in the Genealogy of the Blessed Jesus, and all this to denote thus much unto us, that sin was the Cause which brought our Saviour into the World, and gave God an opportunity to magnifie his Free Grace and Mercy unto Sinners. So that now we may take up the ranting language of St. *Gregory*, *O felix culpa! quæ talem meruit Redemptorem*, *O happy sin! happy sure upon this account, that it has through Gods good Providence, obtained so great and so glorious a Redeemer.* The Whole, saith our Saviour, *needs not the Physitian*; and where there is no Misery, there is no need of Mercy. Had there been no bitterness in the Waters of *Marah*, *Moses* had not needed Sweet-wood to have thrown into them. So had there been
no

no sin, there had not needed the Tears of Repentance, and consequently there had been no need of the Wood of the Cross to sweeten these bitter Waters.

2dly, As God has thus taken occasion from Sin to commend his Free Grace and Infinite Mercy to the World; so he has also taken occasion from hence to glorifie his Holiness and Justice. If bold sinners shall dare to run upon the Bosses of his Buckler, and bid defiance to the great Majesty of Heaven: If neither the Threats of his Law can drive them to Obedience, nor yet the Promises of the Gospel invite them to their Duty, there remains then *nothing, but a fearful looking for of Judgment and fiery Indignation*, to devour these Adversaries. Hence Solomon tells us, *ver. 4. of this Chapter, that God has made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked has he made for the day of Evil.* Tho' he may endure with much Long-suffering the Vessels of Wrath, and employ them as Rods for the Chastisement of others; yet at the last he casts these Rods into the Fire, and magnifies his Power and Justice upon them, when
once

once they are ripe for destruction. It is very observable, that the first *Hallelujah* which we find in the Old Testament, is in the *Psalms*, where mention is made of the destruction of Gods Enemies; and the first *Hallelujah* which is mention'd in the New Testament, is, where the overthrow of Antichrist is feretold in the *Revelations*. Should God suffer sinners still to go unpunish'd, it would reflect upon his Holiness, and cast a stain upon his Justice. Men would be apt to think God a Patron of Wickedness, and would be very much encourag'd in the ways of Ungodliness. God therefore, to vindicate his Honour, and deter Men from sin, is pleas'd very frequently, in this World, to send signal Judgments upon the Workers of Iniquity. Thus when proud *Pharaoh* had a long time withstood all the Miracles of *Moses*, and wrought his Heart at last to the highest degree of hardness, God did then resolve to glorifie himself in his ruin and destruction: And that he might leave some signal Monuments of his Wrath to succeeding Generations, *Orosius* an Ancient Author tells us, that *the prints and foot-steps of their Chariots were*

were a long time after to be seen on the
 shoar, and in the bottom of the Red Sea.
 We may do well also to remember that
 Fire and Brimstone, which was rained
 from Heaven on *Sodom* and *Gomorrha*.
Brochardus, and other sacred Geogra-
 phers, inform us, that that very Land does
 still mourn in Dust and Ashes, and such
 dismal Clouds of Smoke continually
 ascend from it, as make it represent
 nothing so much, as the very Mouth
 and Entrance of Hell. Nay farther yet,
 that God might make abundant provisi-
 ons for the Honour of his Justice (as
 some have computed) this one single
 Judgment is mention'd in Scripture
 above twenty times: God's Providence
 so ordering it, that these wicked *Sodo-
 mites* might be set forth for an Example,
 suffering the vengeance of Eternal Fire.
 And this is the 2^d End to which Gods
 Providence directs sin, namely, the
 glorifying of his Justice.

3^{dly}, God's Providence does farther
 make use of sin, to humble his own
 People. When *David* had murther'd
 his loyal Subject *Uriah*, and committed
 Folly with his Wife; God does after-
 wards make use of these sins, to keep
 his

his Servant humble. To this end we find *Shimei*, one a kin to *Uriah*, sent by a secret impulse of Providence, first to Curse *David* as a *Bloody Man*, and so to remind him of the murther; and then to make him sensible of his Adultery, by casting Stones at him, a Punishment under the Law appointed to the *Adulterer*. Now what Influence this piece of Providence had upon *David*, we learn from 2 Sam. 16. 9, 10. where, when the Sons of *Zeruiah* would have slain *Shimei*, according to his deserts, *David* returns a Negative Answer in these passionate words, *What have I to do with you, ye Sons of Zeruiah?* And then see his Humility in the next words, *Let him Curse, because the Lord has said unto him, Curse David.* He knew God, by this piece of Providence had a design to call his sins to remembrance, and the sense of these makes him so humble, as to think himself worthy of all the Indignities a Cursed *Shimei* could offer to the Lords Anointed. There is a great Truth in the Saying of *St. Austin*, *Audeo dicere superbis interdum utile esse in peccatum cadere: I dare boldly affirm,* says that Holy Father, *that it is profitable*

table for Proud men to fall sometimes into Scandalous sins. St. Peter, that Great Apostle, is observed by the Ancients to have been one of the forwardest and most confident of Christ's Disciples: And we may also gather so much from that Confident Answer he returned to Christ, when he told him, that *tho' all Men forsook him, yet he would follow him to the last*: But when God's Providence had allowed Satan to sift him, and chastise his Confidence by a soar Fall, we find him falling lower in his own Thoughts too: For when Christ, *John ult.* puts the Question to him, *Peter, lovest thou me more than these?*: And he puts it thrice, to remind him of his thrice Denial. *Peter, ver. 17.* returns this modest and humble Answer, *Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.* There is indeed no better way to take down the Peacock's Plumes, than by discovering her black Feet; and hold but a Looking Glass before the stout Elephant, and you will soon teach him to abhor his Deformity.

S 4thly,

4thly, One End more to which God directs the Wickedness of the World, is the glorifying his Wisdom. The Prophet *Esaia* tells us, that *God is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.* Every Event of Providence is of such excellent contrivance, and manag'd with such admirable Wisdom, that we may say of the Works of God's Providence, what the *Psalmist* does of the Works of Creation: *O Lord, how manifold are thy Works! In wisdom hast thou made them all; the Earth is full of thy riches.* So clear a Truth is this, that it has not escaped the Observations of the Heathens; hence it was that they set forth their Gods with Harps in their hands, To shew the Harmony they observed in the Government of the World. Tho' there may happen very often great Confusions here below, and the World may seem to run upon Wheels, as *Ezekiel* himself once thought; yet the same Prophet found at last, that there were Eyes in these Wheels, a Wise Providence which did move and conduct them all to great and glorious Ends. The truth of this might easily be made to appear more at large by
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considering some of the most rugged passages of Providence, such as seem at first view to have been performed with the greatest negligence and deformity, and yet when examin'd from the beginning to the end, have been found to have admirable beauty and comeliness in them. But because the Time will not allow of many Instances, it may suffice at present to shew the truth of this in the famous History of *Jonah*: That this Prophet, when sent about so weighty a matter as the preservation of great *Niniveh*, that he should make delays even when their destruction was but Forty days off: Nay more, that he should fly to *Tarshish*; nay farther yet, that he should be cast into the Sea by the malicious Mariners, and swallowed up presently by a merciless Whale: All these seemed at first to be so many Errata's of God's Providence, and contribute little to the Conversion of *Niniveh*; yet all these seeming Disadvantages were so wisely managed by God's Providence, as to prove great Advantages to that so 'important business: For it is more than a probable Opinion of Divines, that these malicious Mari-

ners were a special Occasion that *Jonah's* Preaching was so successful. For it was these Mariners that informed the *Ninivites* what had hapned unto *Jonah*, how he had been cast into the Sea, swallowed up by the Whale, and consequently could not, but by a special Miracle, have been conducted unto *Niniveh*: And this was that which procured the more Credit to *Jonah's* Preaching, which frightened the *Ninivites* into that most rigorous Fast, which was enjoined by *Sardanapalus* both on Man and Beast. Thus we see how the Wisdom of God's Providence directed the sin of *Jonah*, and the malice of the Mariners, to work out that end they seemed directly to oppose. In this and such like Instances as may be observed in the World, we cannot but take notice of the Beauties of Providence, and ought to admire and adore the Infinite Wisdom of our God, which does so eminently appear in the wonderful government of the greatest Disasters and Confusions here below. I proceed now to draw some few Corollaries from what hath been delivered.

First,

First, We may learn from hence, to abhor the Blasphemy of such men as seem to make God the Author of Sin. Ye hear it is *the Heart of Man* which *deviseth its own wickedness*, and that God by his wise Providence does only direct their Wickedness to great and glorious Ends. Just as a skilful Physician, who does not put Poyson into Serpents and other Venemous Creatures, but only converts their Poysons into Sovereign Medicins.

Secondly, We also learn from hence, whence it is that there is no more Mischief done in the World. When we consider the great Malice of Satan and his Instruments, how great also is their Power, and how formidable their Numbers, we may justly wonder that this World is any better than a larger *Beth-lehem*: But we owe our safety and happiness to the good Providence of God: He sets an Hedge about his People; he curbs the Fury of their Enemies, and directs even the Wickedness of Satan and his Instruments, so as may best serve his own Glory, and the good of his People. It was well said of *Antoninus*, that Noble Philosopher,

Who would desire to live in this World, if it were destitute of God and Providence? If all were left to Chance, and we exposed every where to innumerable Enemies and Dangers? But since there is an over-ruling Providence, saith he, *ἔγω, ὃ ἐυσέβω, ὃ σαπῶ τῷ θειῷ ἐνν*. I adore that Providence, and live sweetly and pleasantly, confiding always in Gods Almighty Protection.. To the same purpose is that of the Royal Psalmist, *Psal. 97. 1. The Lord reigneth, let the Earth rejoyce: let the multitude of the Isles be glad thereof.* But,

Thirdly, It is not enough that we rejoyce under the protection of God's Providence; but we must also adore and worship his great and glorious Name, who does such Wonders for the Children of Men. *Psal. 78. 10.* we are told, that the Wrath of man shall praise the Lord: the remainder of Wrath he shall restrain: The Septuagint read the latter part of the Verse thus, *ἐκπαύσει οὖν, the Rage of Man, say they, shall keep Holiday unto the Lord, i.e. give his People opportunities of lauding and magnifying his glorious Name.* And sure no People in the World ever had more cause to praise and mag-

magnify the Name of God, than we of this Church and Nation. What miraculous Preservations has his good Providence wrought for us? What Plots and Descents has he detected and defeated? How has he baffled the profoundest Policy of the subtlest *Achitophel*, and made him prove, according to his Name in Hebrew, no better than the Brother or Cousin Germain to a Fool? Oh then! let us praise our God according to his excellent Greatness; and being wonderfully *delivered from the hands of our Enemies*, let us serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.

This God of his Infinite Mercy grant, for the Merits of his dearest Son, &c.

S E R M O N XII.

Preached Novemb. 27. 1692,
the Sunday before the
Author died.

Heb. ii. 3.

*How shall we escape, if we
neglect so great Salvation?*

SAint Paul in the former Chapter displays the excellent Glory and Majesty of our Saviour: He styles him, *ver. 2.* the *Son of God*; the *Heir of all things*, and *Maker of the Worlds*: He telis us farther, *ver. 3.* that *He is the brightness of his Fathers Glory*,

Glory, the express Image of his Person, and the upholder of all things : In the following part of the Chapter he shews, how far Christ transcends all the Holy Angels : These he says are but *Servants* and *Ministring Spirits* ; but Christ, He is the *Eternal and only begotten Son of God* : These are all commanded to fall down and worship Christ ; but He has a Throne, a Scepter, a *Scepter of Righteousness*, yea, the Scepter of his own Heavenly Kingdom. Thus great, thus glorious a Person is Christ, Heaven it self has nothing greater ; and yet as great, as glorious as He is, his Father thought fit to employ him in the Work of Mans Salvation. O the wonderful Condescensions of Heaven ! We may be sure God is most willing to save poor Sinners , seeing he sends to them , and that his own Son , to beseech and entreat them to accept of Salvation. Hence is that of *St. Paul* , in the beginning of this Epistle , *God, who at sundry times , and in diverse manners, spake in time past unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.* Had God spoken to us by the meanest of his Prophets, it had been strange and wonderful Condescension,

scension; but that he should send his own Son to preach the Gospel, and entreat rebel Sinners to be reconciled to Heaven, and accept of Eternal Happiness; this is such an Instance of stupendous Love and Mercy, as does as much exceed our Imaginations, as it does our Deserts!

St. Paul having thus displayed the Excellent Majesty of Christ, and the Infinite Riches of God's Free Grace and Mercy, in that he sent his Eternal Son to be the first Preacher of the Gospel, and tender Salvation to lost and undone sinners, he begins the 2d Chapter with a serious and passionate Admonition; *We therefore, saith he, ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.* If God had conveyed the Gospel to Christians, as he did the Law unto the Jews, by the Ministry of Angels, we could not have slighted it without gross Ingratitude; and our *Disobedience*, as we are told *ver. 2.* would have received a just recompence of reward: *Of how much sorer punishment shall we now be thought worthy, seeing the Eternal Son of God condescended to be of the*
Order

Order of Prædicants, seeing Christ Jesus himself vouchsafed to be the *first Preacher* of the Gospel; how should we then honour and value this Gospel? What earnest heed should we give to the things contained in it, or preached from it? Whatever Admonitions, Exhortations, or Reproofs Ministers give us out of these Sacred Oracles, should not be look'd upon as the Words of frail Men, but as they are in truth the Words of God and Christ. Christians therefore will be most inexcusable: They of all men will deserve the severest Punishments, *if they shall neglect so great Salvation.* And because the Danger is thus great, our Apostle is the more earnest and passionate in his Exhortation: He employs all his Divine Rhetorick, to make Christians sensible of their greater Priviledge, and consequently of their greater Obligations to obey the Gospel: *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation?*

Having by this short Preface led you into the very Bowels of the Text, I shall fetch from thence these Three Observations.

First,

First, That the *Salvation* which is published by the Gospel, is exceeding great.

Secondly, That those Christians which neglect this great *Salvation*, must expect the severest punishments in Hell.

Thirdly, That Ministers may very well be allowed, to be mighty earnest and passionate in their Exhortations of Obedience to the Gospel.

First, I begin with the first of these, namely, to shew you, That the *Salvation* which is published by the Gospel, is exceeding great. It is called *Great Salvation* in the Text, yea, the Apostle puts an Emphasis upon it, and calls it, *So great Salvation*. Learned Men render it, *Eximiam ut mire magnam salutem*, i. e. *Most admirable and most excellent Salvation*: And it will appear at large to be so from these following Considerations:

1st, The greatness of this *Salvation* will appear, if we consider the greatness of the Price that was paid for it. The worth and excellency of a thing, is usually measur'd by the greatness of its price. Now, how great was that price which was paid for this *Salvation*?

St. Peter

St. Peter tells us, we were *not redeemed with such corruptible things, as Silver and Gold; but with the precious Blood of the Son of God.* Had we offer'd a thousand Rams, and ten thousand Rivers of Oil: Had we given the fruit of our Bodies, for the sin of our Souls; yea, had it been possible for us to have sacrificed whole Hecatombs of Angels to the Justice of Heaven, they would not all have been sufficient to atone for our Sins, and purchase this Salvation: Nothing could purchase it but the *Blood of Jesus*; and that not only as he was Man, but as he was God too. Hence we are said expressly to be purchas'd with the *Blood of God*, Act. 20. 28. We see an Infinite price was paid Heaven to purchase this Salvation: And therefore we may well allow the Apostles Emphasis of *So great Salvation.*

2ly. The greatness of this Salvation will yet further appear, if we consider the greatness of those evils it delivers us from. It is an excellent saying of *Seneca*, *Lenocinium est gaudii antecedens metus*, the greatness of the Danger uses to commend & inhance the greatness of the Deliverance. Now how great was the danger we were in?

in? How great those Evils we were exposed to? The Prophet *Eſay* gives us a most Tragical Description of the Infernal *Tophet*, which was to be the Portion of the rebellious Sinners, Chap. 30. 31. *Tophet*, saith he, *is prepared of old, the Pile thereof is Fire and much Wood, and the Breath of the Lord like a stream of Brimstone, doth kindle it continually.* See how each word is arm'd with Terror: It seems there is an eternal *Tophet* prepared for all the Enemies of Heaven: It seems the Torments of this Dreadful place is set forth by Fire, one of the cruellest of the Elements. Nay, give me leave to observe farther to you, that this Fire of *Tophet* can be no ordinary material Fire, seeing we are told it was originally prepared for the Devil and his Angels. For since they are Spiritual and Immaterial Beings, they cannot be Tormented by any ordinary material Fire. The Fire therefore of *Tophet* must be of such a strange and dreadful Nature, that this Fire we use is only fit to be a cold and faint emblem of it; and well may we conclude so much, seeing it is said to be kindled by the Breath of the Al-

Almighty. The fiery Furnace of *Babylon* was dreadful enough, tho' it was kindled only by the Breath of an Earthly King; how dreadful then must the Furnace of Hell be, which has all the Ingredients of Torture Omnipotent Vengeance can furnish it with? This Fire of *Tophet*, or Hell, is said yet farther, to be prepared for the Devil and his Angels. Now we know these Hellish Fientls are the most malicious Enemies of Heaven: These Ambitious Spirits endeavoured at the very first to dethrone their Almighty Creator; and since they failed in that black design, they have ever since discovered their inveterate hatred of God, by tempting Mankind into the same cursed Conspiracy against him. Sure then that Fire which is prepared for these malicious Enemies of Heaven, cannot possibly want any Ingredients of Torture, Infinite Wisdom can invent, or Infinite Power inflict. Now such devouring Flames as these were prepared for obstinate sinners, as well as for these fallen Angels. There is one Consideration still behind, which will make these Torments appear more dreadful, and that is the Eternal Duration

tion of them. For here it is that the Worm never dies; here it is that the Fire is not quenched: When the sinner has lain in Hell as many millions of years, as there are Sands on the Sea-shore, he will be no nearer an end of his Torments, than he was the first Moment of his entrance into them. Who can read without trembling, what *St. Mark* tells us, *Chap. 9. 49.* Namely, *that the Damned shall be salted with Fire.* Such it seems is the dreadful Nature of the Infernal Flames, that they do Torment, but not Consume: Like Salt they preserve those wretched Persons they seem to devour. O cruel Mercy of Hellish Flames! O Preservation, worse than the most dreadful Destruction! Thus great are those Evils we are delivered from, and you will easily conclude how great that Salvation is which delivers us from them. The Children of *Israel* did exceedingly rejoyce when they were delivered from the Tyranny of *Pharaoh*, and the Slavery of *Egypt*. But sure Hell is a more dreadful kind of Bondage than *Egypt*; and Satan a worse sort of Tyrant than *Pharaoh*; therefore the Salvation
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tion of the Text, which delivers us from these dreadful and infinite Evils, must needs be exceeding great.

3ly. The greatness of this Salvation will appear yet further, if we consider that Infinite and Eternal Happiness it brings along with it. This Salvation does not only deliver us from Hell, and Eternal Damnation; but it gives us also a Right and Title to the endless Joys of Heaven: Even those Joys which *Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it entred into the Heart of Man to conceive.* If the sweet society of Saints and Angels, if the most ravishing enjoyment of the Blessed Trinity; if an interrupted and eternal fruition of the most desirable Pleasures; if all this be sufficient to make the *Salvation* in the Text exceeding great, then we may pardon *St. Paul's* Emphasis, and allow him to call it *so great Salvation*; for this is that *Salvation* which Christ has purchast, and the Gospel publish'd to the World. Hence Christ is styl'd the *Author of Eternal Salvation*, *Heb. 5. 9.* and is said to have obtained *Eternal Redemption for us*, *Heb. 9. 12.* Joshua was deservedly accounted a mighty

Saviour, because having delivered *Israel* from their malicious Enemies, he gave them a quiet Possession of the Earthly *Canaan*. How great a *Saviour* is our *Joshua*, or *Jesus*, who having vanquished our Spiritual Enemies, has purchast for us the Possession of the Heavenly *Canaan*?

4ly. The greatness of this *Salvation* will further appear, if we consider the Extent and Amplitude of it. This *Salvation* is an universal *Salvation*, all Men have a Right and Title to it; tho' *Salvation* of old was only of the *Jews*, yet now *Christ* is a *Light* to lighten the *Gentiles*, as well as the *Glory* of his *People Israel*. God is now no respecter of Persons, but in every Nation, he that feareth God, and worketh Righteousness, is accepted of him. They are highly injurious to the goodness of God, and to that *Salvation* which was wrought by *Christ*, who would have it restrained to a certain number of persons. For it is most plain from Scripture, that God would have all men to be saved. Hear what the Angel saith unto the Shepherds, *Luke* 2. 10. *Behold, I bring you good Tidings, of great Joy, which shall*
be

be unto all People. Hence Christ is said to give himself a Ransom for all, 1 Tim. 2. 6. as St. John speaks, 1 Epist. 2. 2. He is the Propitiation for our Sins, and not for ours only, but also for the Sins of the whole World. If these places of Scripture be not full and clear enough, St. Paul will tell you, that Christ tasted Death for every Man, Heb. 2. 9. I shall add but one Text more to convince you of this Truth, and it shall be that of St. Peter, 2 Epist. 2. 2. where he speaks of False Teachers, such as privately bring in Damnable Heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift Destruction. It seems Christ bought those that are Damned, as well as those that are Saved; and consequently the Salvation or Redemption which he wrought, must needs be Universal: None are excluded from it, but such as exclude themselves by their Obstinacy and Impenitency. Now if we lay these Four Considerations together; namely, The greatness of the Price which was paid for this Salvation. The greatness of those Evils it delivers us from. The Infinite and Eternal Happiness it brings along with it. And

Lastly, *The Extent and Amplitude of it, which is so great, as to include both Jew and Gentile; we may safely conclude with St. Paul, that it is great Salvation.* Thus I have dispatcht the First General I propos'd, and procede now to the Second.

Secondly, Namely, To shew you that those Christians, who neglect this great Salvation, must expect the severest punishments in Hell. This may be gathered from the words of the Text, where St. Paul delivers himself in these Emphatical Expressions, *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation?* as much as if the Apostle should have said, Christians who disobey the Gospel, must never hope to go unpunisht; nay, these, of all others, must expect the severest punishments. He tells Christians in the foregoing Verse, that the Jews for transgressing the Law of Moses, were to receive a just recompence of reward; *How then, saith he, shall we escape, if we neglect the much greater Salvation of the Gospel?* fairly intimating, that Christians, as they have greater Priviledges and Advantages than others, so the abuse of them will bind them over to proportionably greater Pu-

Punishments. It is the observation of *Menochus*, that *Joshua*, when he aggravates the sin of *Achan*, plays the Herald, and gives an account of his Pedigree; for we are told, *Jos. 7. 1. that Achan was the Son of Carmi, the Son of Zabdi, the Son Zerah, of the Tribe of Judah.* Had *Achan* been a poor Ignorant Heathen, his sin, even in these lower circumstances, would have kindled the Wrath of Heaven, and have pulled down heavy Judgments upon him: But *Achan* that was a Jew, and that no mean Jew, but of the Royal Tribe of *Judah*, and descended from such Noble Progenitors, as *Carmi*, *Zabdi*, and *Zerah*, All Honourable Persons; for him to commit a Trespass of this Nature; his Priviledges and Advantages loaded his sin with the heavier Aggravations, and rendred him obnoxious to a double Punishment, to wit, that of Lapidation, and the other of Burning, which were both inflicted on him, as we read, *Jos. 7. 25.* It seems God proceeds with Sinners according to the Rules of Distributive Justice: He proportions his Punishments according to their respective Priviledges and Advantages. Such

as have enjoyed lesser Priviledges, shall be beaten with fewer Stripes. The poor *Gentiles* will find a cooler place in Hell than the *Jews*, and the *Jews* than the *Christians*. Hear what *St. Paul* saith, *Rom. 2. 12.* *As many as have sinned without the Law, shall perish without the Law, and as many as have sinned in the Law, shall be judged by the Law.* As *St. Austin* speaks, the Law of God which *Moses* delivered to the *Jews*, as it did more clearly discover and forbid all manner of sin, so it did ingeminate, or double their guilt. The poor *Gentile*, who wants the advantages of the *Mosaick* Law, will have the Law of Nature only to answer for. But the *Jew* at the day of Judgment, will find himself condemned both by the Law of Nature, and the Law of *Moses*; and consequently, his Guilt will be double, and his Punishment so much the greater. Hence *St. Paul* tells us, in that same, *Rom. 2. 9.* *That God will render Tribulation and Anguish upon every Soul of Man, that doth Evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.* It seems the *Jew* shall have the precedence of the *Gentile* in Hell; a cursed kind

kind of precedence, and such, as I fancy, few will be very ambitious of.

Thus you see the *Jew* shall, in Hell, be beaten with more Stripes than the *Gentile*: And the Condition of the disobedient *Christian* will be worse than the *Jews*. He has enjoyed greater Advantages than the *Jew*, and must expect greater Punishments: He has the Law of Nature, the Law of *Moses*, and the Law of the Gospel to answer for; and therefore if the Guilt of the *Jew* be double in respect of the *Gentile*, the Christians Guilt will be treble, and render him worthy of much sorer Punishment. Hence is that of our Apostle, *Chap. 10. of this Epistle Vers. 28, 29. If he that despised Moses's Law, died without mercy, of how much sorer Punishment shall he be thought worthy, who has trampled under Foot the Son of God?* It's plain the *Christians* Punishment will be greater than the *Jews*; even as great as the Salvation which was offered him; in a word, so great, that St. Paul, who had the gift of Tongues, was not able to express it otherwise, than in these most Astonishing Expressions; of how much sorer Punishment shall he be thought worthy?

Thus you see, that as there are diversify of Torments in Hell, so the greatest of them will be the Portion of such sinners as do neglect the Salvation of the Gospel; and you will more easily believe this Dreadful Doctrine, when I have given you the true Reasons of it. And.

I. The Gospel which bringeth this great Salvation, was first Preacht and Publisht by Christ, the Eternal Son of God; and this does mightily aggravate the disobedience of Christians. God he sent his Messengers, his Prophets, yea sometimes his Angels to publish and deliver the Law unto the *Jews*. But he has sent his own Eternal Son to Preach and Publish the Gospel to the Christian World; and sure such a wonderful Instance of astonishing Mercy and Condescension, cannot but load the sins of Christians with the most dreadful aggravations. Hear what our Saviour himself saith, John 15. 22. *If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin, but now they have no Cloak for their sin.* The same Argument is here urged by St. Paul, in the Text, *How shall we escape, saith he, if we neglect*

lest so great Salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord? As much as if the Apostle should have said, the Gospel which we, the Ministers of Christ, Preach unto you, it is Christs Gospel, the very same that he, in his own Person, first Preacht and publiht to the World. Sure then you will reverence this Eternal Son of God. Sure ye cannot but think it your Duty to obey his Gospel. As he is the Lord, he may command your Obedience; and as he is your Saviour, who died for you, he does most deserve it. Ye cannot therefore offend against this Gospel, but you must affront the highest instance and demonstration of God's Love. And what Punishment can be great enough to punish such Ingratitude? The Heathens, the Jews and Devils themselves, who are now howling amidst everlasting Burnings, they never sinned against such stupendious Mercy as Christians do; *Of how much sorer Punishment shall they be thought worthy, who trample under Foot the Son of God?*

2. Another Reason why Christians must expect the severest Punishments *if they neglect this great Salvation*, is because

cause the Light of the Gospel is greater and clearer than that of the Law. *Eſay* Prophesying of the times of the Gospel, Chap. 11. 9. Says, *That the Earth ſhall then be full of the Knowledge of the Lord, as the Waters cover the Sea.* St. Peter, 2 Epist. 1. 19. Compares the Light of the Law, to a *dim Light ſhining in a dark place*; alluding, as 'tis thought, to thoſe Candles which were always ſhining in the Temple, becauſe it was a dark place, as having but very ſmall Windows to let in the light of the Sun. But the Light of the Gospel he compares to the Day, intimating that the Light of the Gospel does as far exceed the Light of the Law, as the Light of the Sun does that of a Candle. We know the Vail was upon the Face of *Mofes*, and the weighty concerns of Religion were then wrapt up in obſcure Types and Shadows. But the Shadows being now vaniſht, the Sun of Righteouſneſs is riſen, and *Chriſt has brought Life and Immortality to Light, through the Gospel*, 2 Tim. 1. 10. Thus great is the Light of the Gospel, and therefore thoſe ſins which are committed againſt it, are the more heinous and damnable ſins againſt Knowledge,
have

have more of wilfulness in them, and argue greater contempt of God. Hence such sinners are said in Scripture *to reproach the Lord*, Numb. 15. 30. *Yea, to rebel against the Light*, Job 24. 13. Since therefore Christians sin against greater Light, they must expect severer Punishments; *For he that knoweth his Masters will, and doth it not shall be beaten with more Stripes.*

3. Another reason why Christians must expect the severest Punishments, *if they neglect this great Salvation*, is because the means of Grace, which the Gospel affords for the obtaining of this *Salvation*, are now more plentiful than they were before. St. John tells us, Chap. I. 17. *That the Law was given by Moses, but Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ; of whose fulness, saith he, Verse 16. we all have received, and Grace for Grace, or Grace upon Grace, to denote the great plenty and abundance of it.* The Law could do no more than shew Man his Duty, but the Gospel affords him Grace to perform it. Hence the Preachers of the Gospel are styled *Able Ministers of the New Testament, not of the Letter, but of the Spirit; for the*

the Letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth Life, 2 Cor. 3. 6. The Law is here called the Letter, and is said to Kill, because it shews our Duty, and the Danger of neglecting it, but gives no Grace to help us in the performing of it. But the Gospel is called the Spirit, because the Spirit of Grace does by his internal Operations, accompany the outward Ministration of the Gospel, and so gives us Life.

Thus you see what plentiful Means of Grace, the Gospel affords us for the obtaining of this great *Salvation*: And therefore if we do neglect these Means of Grace, our Condemnation, as it will be more Just, so it will be more Heavy too. This is plain from our Saviours threatening *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida*, *Mat. 11. 21, 22.* *Wo unto thee Chorazin, wo unto thee Bethsaida, for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in Sackcloth and Ashes: But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, at the day of Judgment, than for you.* Thus Christians, as they enjoy more plentiful Means of Grace than others; so if all these

these be lost upon them, they must expect the severer Punishments.

Thirdly, I come now in the Third and Last Place to shew you, That Ministers may very well be allowed to be mighty earnest and passionate in their Exhortations and Admonitions. See how Earnest and Passionate *St. Paul* is in the Text; with what Vehemency and Fervency of Spirit does he cry out, *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation?* *St. Paul* was one of the greatest Orators in the World: And he never thought his Oratory better employed, than in the winning Souls to Christ. Hence we find him in the *Acts*, Preaching with such Zeal and Eloquence, that the Men of *Lycaonia* fancied *Mercury*, their God of Eloquence, was come down from Heaven. And as *St. Paul* was thus Fervent in Spirit, serving the Lord, and promoting the salvation of Souls, so *2 Tim. 4. 2.* He charges Ministers to be Instant in Season, and out of Season, Reproving, Rebuking, and Exhorting with all long Suffering. And in truth what Zeal, what Vehemency can be thought too much for the Pulpit? Indeed the Heathen of old said well,

Stultus

Stultus labor ineptiarum, It is a ridiculous thing, said he, *to make a noise about Trifles.* But sure Life and Death, Heaven and Hell, these are no Trifles. Men do not well consider the worth of Souls, and the greatness of that *Salvation* Christ has purchast for them, when they are offended at the Zeal and Earnestness of Ministers; when they are angry at the seriousness of their Exhortations, or the severity of their Reproofs. But what pity is it, that Hell should be hung with such rich Furniture as the precious Souls of Men? And who would not employ their utmost Zeal to save such wicked sinners, as are ready every moment to drop into Hell Fire? Let me therefore with all seriousness intreat you *to work out your Salvation with Fear and Trembling.* As ye love your own Immortal Souls, and value that Infinite Price which Christ has paid for them; as you dread the everlasting Burnings of the infernal *Tophet*, and earnestly desire the endless Joys of Heaven, be perswaded to break off your League with Sin, and make your Peace with Almighty God, that when ye come to die, your Blessed Saviour may see the travel of his Soul,

Soul, and be satisfied ; that he may then be as ready to Bestow on you, as he was to Purchase for you ; that ye may at last obtain this great *Salvation*. Which God grant unto us all, for the sake of Jesus Christ, to whom, &c.

*The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the Love of God, &c.*

F I N I S.